*There is no group more mythical than Faust*
***Julian Cope***

*When the Germans do something, they don't fuck around*
***Jean-Hervé Péron***

*In 1970 Polydor Records funded an unusual experiment. They gave some unknown German musicians a retreat in the countryside near Hamburg, equipped it with a studio and their best engineer, then left them free to do as they liked. This is the story of Faust and the music they made between 1970 and 1975, music which continues to inspire and confound listeners to this day. Along the way, Andy Wilson recounts the rise of Krautrock and its connection with the social upheavals of the late '60s and early '70s. He also discusses the role of time in music, takes a swing at Frank Zappa and looks in detail at the records Faust made in their heroic years.*

*Andy Wilson lives in Hackney, London. He has been listening to Faust for the best part of a lifetime.*

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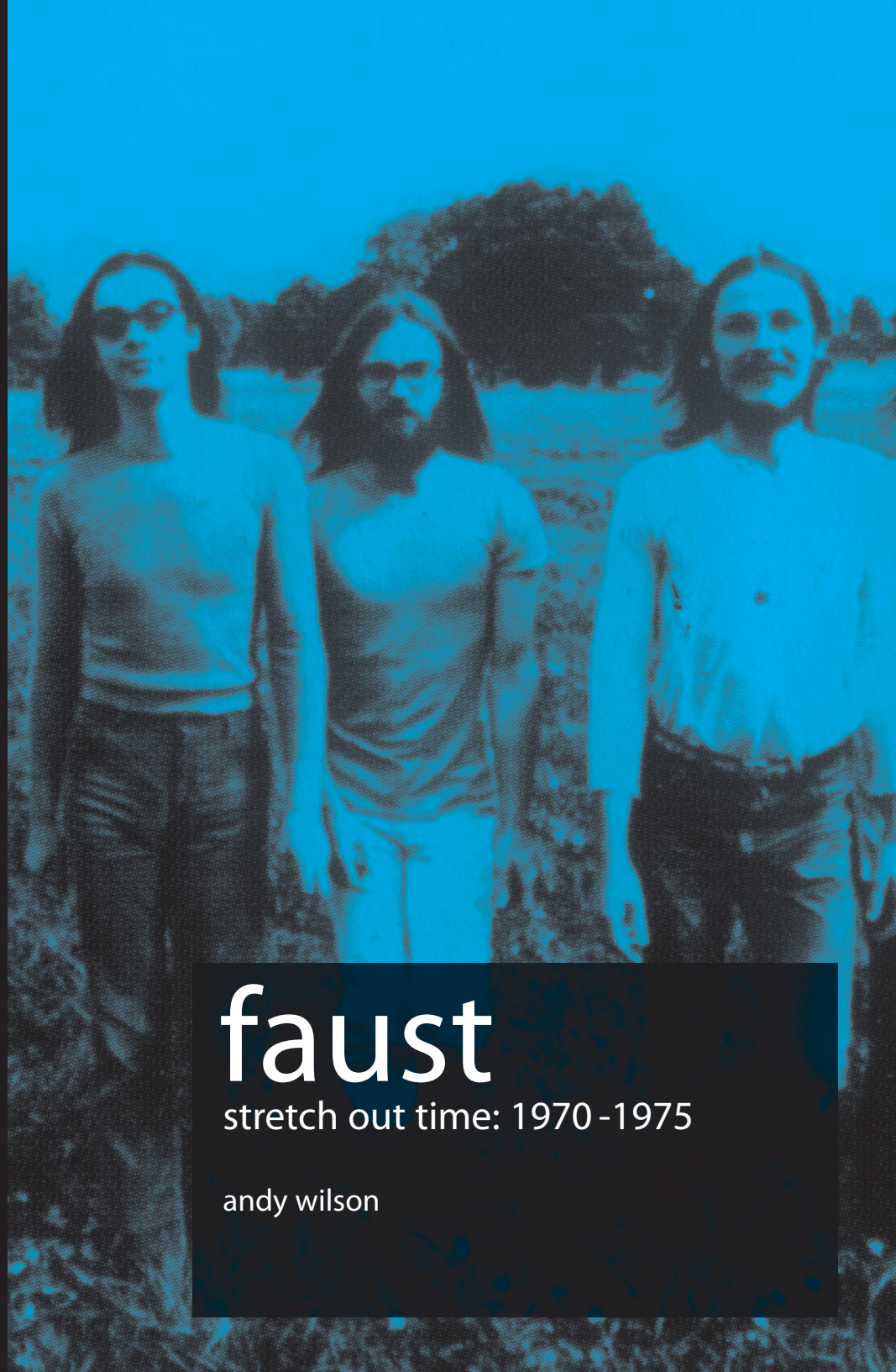
andy wilson

**faust**

stretch out time: 1970 -1975



# faust

## stretch out time: 1970 -1975

andy wilson

# faust

stretch out time
1970-1975

andy wilson

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2006

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*Perhaps a better hour may at some time strike even for the clever fellows: one in which they may demand, instead of prepared material ready to be switched on, the improvisatory displacement of things... As little as regressive listening is a symptom of progress in consciousness of freedom, it could suddenly turn around if art, in unity with the society, should ever leave the road of the always identical.*

***Adorno***

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# Preface: Das Lied eines Matrosen

*You know your music when you hear it one day. You fall into line… until you pay the piper.*

***Brion Gysin***

I wasn't a teenage Krautrocker. At school I was listening to Slade, Mott the Hoople, Alex Harvey, Hawkwind and The Upsetters while my friends went for Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Genesis instead. At 16 I joined the Royal Naval Fleet Air Arm, part of the Royal Navy, as an electronic engineering apprentice. Working on helicopters, I also learned to turn a lathe, weld, salute, solder, polish boots and maintain radio and radar systems.

In the story I want to tell it is 1981, perhaps already 1982, and I am based at HMS Osprey, an air station on Portland, an island off the Dorset coast of England. When I tell my commander that I am not happy to serve in the Falklands War I face a 'positive vetting' security review by the detectives of the Special Investigations Branch. This goes on for months. It ends one day when, working in the air traffic control tower, I am called in to see the air station's captain. He gives me 24 hours to hand in my kit and complete the necessary bureaucracy before leaving the armed forces for ever.

Before then, until the Special Investigations Branch produce their report, my life is up in the air. On weekends while the investigation runs its course I leave the Navy behind, taking the train to London as a part-time punk.

One Saturday afternoon at this time I was in the Rough Trade shop on the Portobello Road when I noticed an odd-looking 7" sleeve on the wall. The cover was a solid bloc of red matte ink with a small white border at the sleeve's edges. Across the middle in a lurid green serif font it said simply 'Faust'. The collision of green text on an almost luminous red background allows the name 'Faust' to lift free of its background; for a few moments it hangs suspended in mid-air between the wall and me.

Though I haven't heard their music, I have heard of Faust. They are an obsolete group of revolutionary German hippies whose music is famously unhinged. Too extreme for the mainstream, they worked at its margins, appearing in old music articles and reviews as lunatics and incendiaries as much as working musicians. I have them in mind as a deranged wing of '70s progressive rock. I've read too, or heard somewhere, that no one knew who the members were or what they looked like, that they operated anonymously and secretively, like a revolutionary cell, and were supposed to be linked somehow to the Baader-Meinhof Group.

Despite these credentials I don't understand why the supposedly post-punk Rough Trade would be selling their records. At this point I'm a zealot who takes it for granted that "Anarchy in the UK" defines cultural ground zero. Everything before its release is suspect, so it intrigues me that this (to my young mind) blatantly hippy group are being touted in the shop. Had punk's permanent revolution run out of steam to the extent that it could so carelessly revive the hippy culture it set out to bury? But I know that Rough Trade is a something of hippy commune anyway, and anything is possible.

Whatever my doubts, the way that the group's name unhinged itself so casually from the wall tells me the signs are good and I should buy the record. It is on Chris Cutler's Recommended Records label (ReR) and is called **Faust Party Tapes #1**. I don't get to hear it until I return from the weekend to my base on the coast on Sunday evening. When I finally play it I find that one side is a hypnotic electro-waltz (**Chromatic / Party #3**) which slows time through the trick of not doing much. It feels menacing





and unresolved as it weaves and clicks its way about, but it doesn't make a great first impression.

The other side is a different story. It starts with a few seconds of clenched synthesiser noise (**Party #6**) which suddenly turns into a keyboard driven piece of what sounds at first like jazz-rock (**Giggy Smile / Party #1)**. I don't know it at the time but this is an instrumental version of a Faust favourite. Its spell turns around the spiralling keyboard and a guitar that stings like a parasite needling a way into its host, erupting in a shower of sparks while still managing to act out something like a blues call and response. It strikes me from the first listen that this is different to anything else I have heard before.

There's something odd about the music. It feels angular, awkward and non-conformist, but has a logic of its own. It is fragile but hints at something uncompromising, and it has angles I haven't heard before, suggesting that there are secrets tucked under the music's waterline. The music has a naïve quality but sounds like the musicians are laughing at a joke the rest of us don't understand. It is maybe a little like Zappa, except that it doesn't annoy this younger version of me by being too patently clever-clever. It avoids the comfortable pretensions of the Canterbury scene; it is at least as heady as Zappa, the Canterbury groups (The Soft Machine, Caravan, Egg, Hatfield and the North) or perhaps Henry Cow, but it is garage-psychedelic rather than self-consciously progressive, which makes the difference. It even has a touch of Marc Bolan about it. At least that is how it seemed at the time.

The record doesn't sound like a job application to a record company or 'me too' rock histrionics, and doesn't try to flatter you. It feels as self-referentially contained as dub reggae without sounding anything like it. Whoever made it seemed not to care what others would think or how they might respond to it - the music was made first as a kind of hermetic gesture. Maybe the group felt compelled create this sound, possessed by some kind of epileptic inspiration; maybe the music is part of a master plan that would make sense of the recordings if only I knew what it was. It couldn't have been recorded with an eye to a big market

and major success, or even any niche market I know of; or maybe it *was* aimed at such an audience and I've simply yet to meet them.

The recording ends with a cut-up of a monologue, concluding *"Write it down for me. I'll use it in my column next week"*, but the tape has been aggressively warped and spliced; words run back and forward, jumping out of place, accelerating and decelerating before coming to a dead stop *via* the punctuation of the final sentence. Anyone who has heard William Burroughs and Ian Sommerville's recordings at the Beat Hotel knows the effect these tape manipulations have on your sense of reality: time flutters as if in a haze, then dissolves completely in the face of such complete disregard for form.

By now I'm very interested. I lift the record player's arm to drop the needle back to the start. This time the opening electronic blizzard seems to stand guard to the un-worldliness of the record, and the music that follows seems familiar from dreaming, sharing its convoluted logic. But it is definitely more like spiky, secular, candy coloured pop than anything sublime or didactic; it spits light and colour and cackles with glee. My head nods while my brain moves to the twists and turns of the music, and my relationship to Faust puts down roots. Looking back now, all of my later experiences of their music seem to flow easily from this first moment. Soon I was listening to anything I could find by Faust.

The sleeve notes to my copy of The Velvet Underground's *Live 1969* album ask what their music will sound like in a hundred years from now, how it will be thought of by then. The way the question is put makes you think of the group the way people imagine classical composers - timeless and unworldly. I understand that it is an odd question but still I can't help but wonder what my favourite records will mean to anyone by the time some distant relative finally sells them off on eBay. In other words, is Faust's music built to last? Is it anything special, worth remembering and discussing? Perhaps it just a prejudice of mine to rate it so highly and want to spend time with it.





For me at least it is as hard to believe that people will stop listening to Faust as it is to imagine that they'll stop listening to Sun Ra, John Coltrane, Frank Zappa, Cecil Taylor, Edgard Varèse, Robert Johnson or Captain Beefheart. On the other hand I'm not sure what the future holds for The Velvet Underground.

Assuming that people continue to listen to music for the reasons we listen now – to feel the thrill of an articulate and unusual world of sound, innovative but human, speaking directly and intelligently to us and helping to wake us up - then I suppose it is as simple as saying that I think Faust meet the standard, and people will continue to listen to them because they want to hear passionate music of invention.

Twenty-five years after buying **Giggy Smile,** though they are not the absolute centre of my musical life the way they were, I still listen to Faust, making new connections and hearing new things. Like many powerful inspirations, Faust's music runs deep, in the sense of being difficult to exhaust. At its best it offers new faces and ideas for as long as you care to look. In different ways over the years it has inspired and astounded me, made me smile and sometimes laugh out loud. At times it even helped encourage me when I felt tired of everything. I wrote these notes as a way of repaying a debt, because I wanted to say something about where the group came from, as well as commenting on the music and what you might get from it. In other words, I have tried to paint a little picture of the group, their work and times, and the situation that created them.

I apologise for cutting the story short in the middle of the 1970s, the year I left school to join the Navy and during which the group first disbanded. I am a fan of the recordings made after Faust reformed in the '80s, especially those like *you know faUSt*, which conjured up the soul of the early group, and *Ravvivando*, which took the same spirit onto new territory, but Faust's reputation hangs on their earliest incarnation. They produced their most significant work then, and it is this period I concentrate on.

At a slight tangent to the rest of the book I have included chapters about Krautrock, about the role of time in music, and on

Frank Zappa. I thought that these subjects touched on aspects of Faust's music worth saying something about. However, they can be read separately from the rest of the book or, if you prefer, they can be ignored.

In talking about the music I discuss Faust's records more or less in the order of recording and release. Where collections and compilations overlap I treat the individual recordings separately from the albums, leaving you to track them down on whatever compilation is nearest to hand. Almost all of the material discussed is available on the Recommended Records box set, *The Wümme Years*, which, despite its title, collects recordings from both Wümme and Munich and is indispensable to any serious fan. If you own a copy of the re-released *Faust IV* as well you will have all of the music Faust recorded in their first years bar only a few stray tracks. Still, I have included a short discography at the end of the book to help you see through the gaps in my account and discover where each track was originally released.

I should offer a warning about some aspects of what follows. The big catch is that, despite my efforts, the essentials about Faust must remain obscure. There are two reasons for this. First, when it comes to history, memories fail and are privately edited, particular facts are overrated and unpleasant truths are forgotten, glossed or avoided. Disagreements within the group create branching, alternative histories that it is impossible for outsiders to choose between at a distance, at least without doing the kind of research I do not pretend to have carried out. The second problem runs deeper. It concerns the relationship between music and the word; great music is alchemical and doesn't transfer to the page, even in the hands of those better equipped to try.

Being unable to squeeze Faust's music into some handy system, I can only say how things seem from my point of view. There is nothing new about this, which applies to all writing about music, but it needs airing so that you can be sure I have no ambitions to capture a definitive Faust or write a broad, inclusive history. My decisions about what to review, what to say about it and what to pass over, will seem arbitrary to someone with a





different point of view. I have written a partial account of the music and don't pretend to see things from all sides; that kind of objectivity would be beyond me even if I wanted it.

Other than the records themselves my sources have been press releases, reviews, interviews and sleeve notes, as well as conversations I've had in person and by email with the members of Faust. I'd like to thank Hans-Joachim 'Jochen' Irmler (HJI) and Jean-Hervé Péron (JHP) in particular, as they suffered the most. Arnulf Meifert told me that an enthusiastic fan is a group's worst enemy; still we managed to fraternise for the length of a hot afternoon at the Scheer festival in 2005, long enough for him to tell me something of his version of events. Cornelia Paul of Klangbad Records has gone out of her way a hundred times to be helpful, as she does for everyone. I conducted interviews with Jochen and Chris Cutler (of Henry Cow and Recommended Records) for Resonance Radio (*www.resonancefm.com*) as part of the *A Day in the Life* special on Faust broadcast in August 2002, and I have drawn on these interviews and conversations throughout.

The booklets accompanying *The Wümme Years* compilation have been an important source of information, including as they do accounts of events by characters who have otherwise been largely silent, including Uwe Nettelbeck, Peter Blegvad and Kurt Graupner. There was a fine interview with Jochen Irmler in the magazine *Ptolemaic Terrascope* some years ago which I have drawn on a number of times, and Zappi Diermaier (ZD) has his own web site (*www.zappi-w-diermaier.com*) which carries a number of interesting articles, interviews and opinions concerning the group's history.

Julian Cope deserves a mention for his book *Krautrock-sampler*, which has been an inspiration and a mine of information - some of it accurate. His enthusiasm rescued Faust for a generation who might otherwise never have heard them. Despite his waffle about the Earth-Goddess, his writing embodies the sort of awed stupefaction and trigger-happy speculation that the music deserves.

I mention the most important sources now because I have chosen not to include references in the text when I could avoid it, on the grounds that nothing much depends on them (as a matter of fact I aimed for a sort of theoretical perfection in the matter of footnotes, which I think I achieved). To try to make up for the lack of footnotes and references I added two brief bibliographies at the end for anyone anxious to know something about my sources and maybe also the wider context of the argument and some supporting ideas and arguments.

Others who helped me or provided information in their roles as members, friends, touring partners and associates of the band include Olivier Manchion and Amaury Cambuzat of Faust, PermanentFatalError and Ulan Bator; Lars Paukstat and Michael Stoll of Faust; Steve Lobdell of Faust, Sufi Mind Game and The Davis Redford Triad; Uli Trepte of Guru Guru; S Person, Claudio Hills and Bruno Gebhard; Geoff Leigh and Tim Hodgkinson of Henry Cow; Joachim Gaertner and Martin Brauner of S/T; Maeyc Hewitt, Alan Holmes and Ann Matthews of Ectogram; and Ralph bei der Kellen, Michael Kneidl, Thomas E. Martin and Carina Varain.

Some of my greatest debts are to the members of the Faust-Pages mailing list. First I should mention David Heale, who gave me the press cuttings and interviews which formed the bulk the Faust-Pages site (*www.faust-pages.com*) when it was launched some ten years ago. Other members of the list did work deciphering lyrics, checking track listings and the like. Beyond that, their discussions, digressions, memories and interpretations added greatly to my understanding. I would especially like to mention JS 'Artbear' Adams, Moe Anders, Graham Andrew, Simon Barbarossa, Ralph Bei Der Kellen, David Bourgoin, James Bowers, Robert Bunting, Phil Burford, Robert Carlberg, Andrew Cimino, Graham Clare, Olivier Coiffard, John Davies, Francesc Diaz i Melis, Jim 'JD Lennon' Donnelly, Sam Dutton, David Enzor, Ferrara Brain Pan, Steve Fligelstone, Richard Fontenoy (Kosmische / FREQ / Drones) and Frankie, Andrew Gardner, Adrian Gilbert, James Gray, Dennis Hodgkins, John Hubbard (JHSilent), John Jacob, Robert Jaz, Gustavo Jobim, Romford JohnO / John Osbourne / Johnny Badboy, Dane Johnson, Walter Kelly, Ilja Kukuj, Simon Lang, Corey Larkin, Howard Laskin, Rick Le Fauve, John Lind, Christoph Linder (Planet Rock), Den Lowrie, David MacLennan, Tom Martin, Richard Moore, Ian Morrisson (Darq), Andy Nemeth, Filippo Neri, Paul Nuttall, Simon Peacock, Ivo Peeters, Claudio Penteriani, Zoltan Pfefer, Steve Pittis (Dirter / Band of Pain), Michel Ramond, Keef Roberts (SubVulture/Resident), Tony Roberts, Stephen Robinson, Dan Rodenburg, Yassen Roussev, Vincent S, Ryan (Spamking), Mick Scarrott, Richard Shields, Dave Simpson, Gary Steel, Phil Turnbull, Mick Thompson, Benjamin Tinker, Phil Turnbull, Ronnie Waernes, Gerald Wiegand, Aubrey Williams, Ed Wilson and Dixon Wragg.

List members Clay Holden, Nick Medford, Adriano Lanzi, Simon Lang and Tom Berger all commented on drafts of the book. Marc Medwin, James Baker and Fabio Cardone made suggestions that changed my understanding of Faust's history. Marc in particular was able to correct many points of my analysis, and I am lucky to have been able to draw on his detailed understanding of Faust's music. Fabio's knowledge of Faust's history surpasses my own; when in doubt I found it wiser to defer to him.

Of my oldest comrades, Conor Kostick first encouraged me to write these notes (more accurately, he shamed me into it) and, as required, reminded me to get on with what I'd started. Ian Land not only needled me about writing; over the years he has attended hundreds of concerts with me, sharing his judgement and knowledge. Much of what I know about music today is due to him.

Finally, I owe it to my mother Edith, partner Sophie and daughter Ruth to thank them for putting up with me at all.

*London, August 2006*

# Germany Calling

*After World War II there was this big void. Death had put on the mask of a loyal official and our parents had become used to the rules and never asked any questions. And then Coca Cola and rock'n'roll come bursting into the void. And all of a sudden, we realized that we can ask questions, that we can do things in a different way and that we can choose NOT to do anything.*

***Gunter Wüsthoff***

*This is the time we are in love with.*

***Faust Manifesto***

How did it happen that so many German groups and musicians in the late '60s and early '70s came to make music not only different to that of their US and British peers, but *so* different as to sound as if they might be working from a different set of rules? There were plenty of German Xerox copies of Anglo-American rock - aspiring Pete Townsends, Keith Richards and their sort - and basic progressive-rock banalities turned out to be surprisingly attractive to the German mind. But the best led a riotous breakaway from the mainstream, over the edge and into the unknown.

Their music had its reference points and precursors out west - Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, Henry Cow, Pink Floyd, The Soft Machine and Hendrix - but Germany was alone in producing such a concentrated and distinct response to the times. In popular terms perhaps only Jamaican reggae and US hip-hop ever matched the Germans for originality and extremism

(and on a broader basis too). In each case the musicians used the potential of new, democratised technologies to create corresponding new sound-worlds.

Not only did the Germans map out the beginnings of a northwest passage around the rock music of their time, between them they carried out something of a revolution in rock's sound palette, technology and processes, laying down markers for another thirty years of invention. Except for Kraftwerk and, perhaps, Can and Tangerine Dream, their innovations resonated at first only at the margins of rock music, but the effect recoiled ever closer toward the centre as the years passed.

Their music - dubbed 'Krautrock' by the press of the time, after the track on *Faust IV* - was a crystal ball in which those demented enough could see things to come and feel the shock of the new in unadulterated form. Kraftwerk and Neu! cut the templates for electronic dance music; Cluster wrote the manual on electronica and Can helped to invent world-fusion; while Guru Guru and Amon Düül, in different ways, remain models of stoned psychedelic excess.

Above and beyond the rest, Faust showed that a rock group could be genuinely, shockingly creative. Refusing to be hemmed into a single style or mood so as to be easily distinguished as a brand, they were not destined to sell a lot of records by the standards of the time, but they seemed capable of every kind of innovation, torturing received models to suit their purposes and spewing invention along the way. From their Wümme lair (and later from Oxfordshire and Munich) they issued recordings which seemed designed to prove it possible to work successfully with almost any sound or intuition. In this they were picking up a thread from Zappa, but they ran further with it and took greater risks.

Throbbing Gristle, The Lemon Kittens, Nurse With Wound, This Heat and others would build on Faust's example. Simon Reynolds once lazily described Nurse With Wound as *"the world's longest running Faust tribute band"*. This short-changes the canny Stapleton, but you can see what he means (Stapleton was a major Faust fan, even hitching out to Germany in the





early '70s to track them down at Wümme, only to find them away on tour). Reynolds argues that Throbbing Gristle were also a psychedelic band, albeit one that *"replaces kissing the sky with staring into the cosmic abyss."* Along with their radical imagination and brutal attitude to sound, this puts Throbbing Gristle in the tradition of Faust. It is a sign of what has changed since the '70s that even someone like Reynolds, a career journalist, sees the connections.

Slint, Tortoise and other post-rock bands are said to have picked up Faust's baton, though the link is tenuous in their case. Sonic Youth, Volcano the Bear, Comets on Fire and Jackie-O Motherfucker all echo Faust in one way or another. Einstürzende Neubauten seem deeply indebted to Faust but deny any direct influence. In any case, Faust's hold on later musicians is palpable when you scratch at the history, despite having sometimes been obscured and overlooked by mainstream journalism. If they never quite reached the mass audience they aimed for, they have certainly been a hit with other musicians.

While Faust represent one of the extremes of German musical radicalism, others forged similar paths while trying to realise their own escape plans, even if they didn't range as widely. Harmonia, Ash Ra Tempel, Cluster and The Cosmic Jokers come to mind, though there were many more. The common waywardness and ambition of so many groups should not be taken to mean that they worked from a shared manifesto, or shared a common goal. German rock economics at the time these groups emerged meant that there was little or no scene linking the major cities, and there is only slight evidence of direct influence, and few examples of collaboration.

More typically, the musicians chose to work in hot house retreats (Can's Inner Space and Kraftwerk's Kling Klang studios, Amon Düül's Munich commune, Faust's Wümme commune-studio) developing their art intensively and in private. Between them they often had little in common besides the obvious background implied simply by being young German musicians. Faust specifically made a policy of not listening to other groups, German or otherwise, lest the experience blow them off course.

But this mutual isolation only adds weight to the problem, making it all the more strange that the groups converged. How did it happen?

Like their European and American brothers and sisters the Germans inherited the rise of the youth market in a post-war economic boom created by the permanent arms economy, with cold war arms production, east and west, keeping profit margins high and the international economy buoyant. Essentially, armaments spending siphoned off surplus value from the economy and stopped it over-inflating, allowing it to develop smoothly over a long historical period.

This new youth market also motored the emergence of 'youth' as a powerful new social category, along with the ideas and paraphernalia connected with it. The rise of rock and roll was underpinned by increased leisure time, the appearance of a generation of young workers with wages to burn, and increasingly independent teenagers with pocket money and allowances to spend. The growth of that market, the further development of studio and recording techniques and the start of a political crisis as the post-war boom finally began to wind down all conspired to breed a generation interested as much in forcing their own agenda on the media as they were in becoming celebrities moulded by the existing media, marketing and advertising industries.

To some extent this new market simply allowed teenagers, students and young workers to let off steam as a prelude to integrating them into the adult world of responsibility and conformism. It is also true that the developing economy needs to encourage a degree of (carefully managed) transgression in order to slowly expand the scope of the products it can sell. But from Elvis onward a series of developments helped turn at least a section of the market for youth music into a site of musical innovation and political contest.

In this permanent revolution Elvis's gyrating hips only set the early stirrings in motion. The Beatles made another decisive breech, proving that groups could write and play their own material, beginning to wrest control from Tin Pan Alley





and the company studios. Dylan reinforced The Beatles' point with explicit poetry and high-cultural claims for his work. His supporters among journalists and critics raced to introduce the idea of the popular musician as an artist, along with the mystifying baggage the idea drags in its wake.

Technical innovation provided the underpinning and context for other changes. Guitarist Les Paul made the first experiments with multi-track recording in the 1940s. Rock'n'Roll was born a few years later along with the sound of distortion when, on his way to a session in 1951, guitarist Willie Kizar dropped his amplifier, tearing open the speaker cone. Producer Sam Phillips liked the buzz-saw sound made by the broken equipment and used it in recording the track "Rocket 88", often cited as the first rock'n'roll single (credited to Jackie Brenston and the Delta Cats, the band was actually Ike Turner's Kings of Rhythm with Brenston on vocals).

The sound proved so popular that dedicated fuzz, overdrive and distortion units were soon being sold which allowed musicians to recreate the effect without the inconvenience of first having to destroy a costly amplifier. These new devices (and further experimentation in the studio) inspired another generation of electronic effects, treatments and manipulations used increasingly on stage and, especially, in the studio. All the while the music was drifting away from the naturalistic sound of acoustic instruments toward more artificial, electronic textures appropriate to the new technologies of consumption - the record player and radio.

Specialist producers such as Joe Meek began to perfect the art and science of recording and treating sound. In parallel with this, avant-garde musicians such as Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry (at ORTF) were devising ever more sophisticated methods of manipulating sound on tape. William Burroughs was using tape recorders to conjure his own transformations of time and place, and experiments with purely electronic music took place at a number of research institutes (CCRMA, GRM, IRCAM, MIT). Even when they originated outside of the commercial arena, these developments tended to converge in the hands of more

commercially oriented musicians in the early '60s as they sought to increase their control over the production and presentation of their work. Often the new technology was used simply to create striking effects that might stick in consumers' minds long enough for them to remember to buy the record, turning sonic invention into atoms of pure novelty, but taken together they gradually but irreversibly changed the sound palette and texture of popular music.

Due to its expanding market and the influence this gave the most successful artists, rock music in particular came to be seen as a medium where you could exercise more control than in the pop market while achieving more success and influence than was possible in the university art department. Because chart oriented music generally involves sticking to formulas and trailing the fashion of the moment it has usually been thought of as demeaning even when it pays well; nobody wants to be a vinyl battery hen (except Paul Morley, whose bovine populism in the early '80s celebrated everything vacuous in the name of defeating 'seriousness'. As I write this he is on TV hymning the music of James Last). Not that pop music should simply be written off as trivial; for all that it is marketed as pure distraction, its greatness rests in the hope that one day its promise of ecstasy will be taken seriously.

The academic and art music of the time had little enough audience to speak of. Its lack of engagement with the public reduced it to impotence even while lending it room for manoeuvre in terms of the techniques and ideas it developed, many of which would find their way into the mainstream anyhow. At the fringes of academic music, largely under the influence of John Cage, an experimental scene developed that would eventually blend back into jazz and rock music *via* the work of Cornelius Cardew, The Scratch Orchestra and AMM; Frederic Rzewski, Richard Teitelbaum, Alvin Curran and MEV; and Franco Evangelisti, Ennio Morricone and Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza. Apart from isolated cases, however, this influence needed a space of decades to take effect and, Morricone apart, the musicians remained





largely marginalised. Even now their impact is limited. Ligeti's soundtrack to "2001: A Space Odyssey" may have done something to help connect the worlds of art and popular music, as did some of The Beatles' tape collages, coming from the opposite direction.

So-called 'classical music' was bound to a small, fairly well defined roster of accepted works and composers - 'the repertoire'. Hostile to innovation, orchestras churned out their fare at events whose primary purpose was not at all musical. The concerts were designed instead to allow the middle and upper classes to socialise and parade, mixing with the spirit of Culture in the hope that its allure might somehow rub off on them.

Like any producer of commodities, the classical music industry needed new products to sell and new works to perform. But even where it condescended to engage with living composers it was on condition that their music resembled the old and familiar. Partly this was to save on rehearsal time and fees; partly it reflected the drive to commodify the music entirely and make it endlessly identical to itself. Where genuinely new music was performed it was usually at arts council funded events organised by the musicians themselves, and it often attracted an audience consisting only of other musicians.

Classical music strained to underline the loftiness of its high art. At the same time it tried to expand its market, selling this same loftiness on to a mass audience as a token and a fetish. Not only was the music supposed to be uplifting, it turned out to have almost supernatural powers - play Bach to your baby to make it smarter. The music was becoming not much more than a class signifier whose chief selling point was its name and status. Consequently, every aspect of the music was geared toward advertising this status; it became difficult to listen to it without hearing it mutter all the time 'this is classical music'. In the meantime, considered as music, it gravitated toward kitsch - nostalgia for a thoroughly misremembered past.

From Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington through to Coltrane and beyond, jazz developed new and innovative forms at a dizzying rate, making it the decisive art form of the

20th century, but it did so in a growing vacuum once its audience started to peel away in the '60s. The rift between musician and audience started with Charlie Parker, whose music first led critics to draw a boundary line between jazz as entertainment and jazz as art. Coltrane stretched jazz close to its limits and his successors went further still, but they were met with incomprehension from a good proportion of their audience. Some critics went so far as to call the new music 'anti-jazz', and musicians started to move out of the bars and clubs into community spaces and the loft scene.

Many black musicians were happy to get out of venues owned and controlled by white gangsters, pimps and crooks, returning their music to the black community where, as supporters of black power and the black consciousness movement, they argued that it belonged. Some went as far as to abandon Apartheid America altogether in favour of Europe, where they felt their music and themselves as men and as musicians were more likely to receive the respect they deserved. Either way, the effect was to dislodge and centrifugally disperse the music from the clubland that had been its cradle.

Against this background rock music began to look like something of a haven in combining a degree of creative freedom with the possibility of reaching a paying audience, and a large one at that. Young listeners at least were abandoning jazz in its favour. Hoping to bridge this gap, there were a series of more or less successful attempts at combining rock and jazz, most notably by Miles Davis, but no one ever finally delivered the promised fusion of jazz complexity and rock power (apart from Zappa and Coltrane; and Coltrane achieved it casually, without paying much explicit attention to rock, his classic quartet sounding at times like the group Hendrix's Band of Gypsies should have been, if that isn't too stupid a way of putting it). Most of those involved in jazz-fusion built awkward amalgams that failed to convince either constituency, and jazz as a style and idiom set out on the long march that ends with Wynton Marsalis and Stanley Crouch.

Increasingly, new communications technologies allowed the music of the world to influence the west throughout these





developments. While classical composers had taken inspiration from local folk music, now musicians began to draw on the music of the entire world. Famously, Debussy's introduction to a Javanese gamelan group at the Paris Exposition of 1889 led him to incorporate something of its sounds into his work, and this line of influence grew throughout the course of the next century.

Cage was drawn to world music for the way it offered different models of musical interaction, and jazz musicians of the '60s had their own reasons to look to new sources, particularly the music of Africa and India - a development best illustrated by Sun Ra's use of African drumming and Coltrane's growing absorption in, and mastery of, Indian and Asian scales and melodies. Ravi Shankar's 1962 album *Improvisations* was a major influence in this regard, and Joe Harriott's *Indo-Jazz Suite* (Columbia, 1965) showed how much could be gained from such attempts at fusing traditions. When George Harrison heard a sitar played on the set of the film "Help!" he decided to find out more, initiating rock's flirtation with Indian music and Asian exoticisms. These globalising trends were enabled by new communications technologies, and underpinned by the migration of labour created by the developing world economy - workers taking their music with them to new lands as they chased employment and fled war around the world.

Pop and academia, jazz and classical have their own freedoms and pleasures, of course, while rock music can be as dull and irritating as anything else produced for the market, especially one driven so hard by novelty and fashion, but by the mid to late '60s rock had anyhow come to represent a musical freedom that might be used, as they liked to say, progressively. This freedom was constrained by the economic realities of dealing with the powerful recording and entertainment industries, but even here the ideology of rock's freedom left room for manoeuvre. Few could afford to be seen as just the plaything or property of their record company. Often such freedoms were illusory; sometimes they were not. By the late '60s rock music had become an arena where musicians could hope to innovate and make music relevant to themselves and their friends while maintaining

a dialogue with a paying audience. And then there were the attractions of fame, drugs and groupies.

With regard to all of these factors - economic, social and technical - the Germans were in essentially the same position as everyone else. However, along with the obvious language difference, local peculiarities helped push them further than the anglo-rock scene, over the edge toward another stage of evolution. To see how these factors came to bear you first need to consider the situation elsewhere, in rock music's homelands, and use this as a benchmark against which to compare the German experience.

The Americans had a huge native musical vocabulary to work with as a platform for development - jazz, country, folk, Broadway and the blues. These they adopted wholesale, only knocking off the rough edges to make the music palatable to a mass market. And even if they watered down the blues, the results were still alarming to ears at home with the status quo, bringing into question the certainties of Eisenhower's American dream.

Rock and Roll seemed, often in spite of itself, to be in love with the music of America's poor and despised, its itinerants, redneck farmers, militant IWW trade unionists, its downtrodden and, above all, its black underclass. To some extent this identification with the dispossessed was conscious and deliberate. Sometimes it was reactionary - country music in particular often seemed wedded to the most conservative instincts among its audience. Communists and others aligned with the labour movement (Pete Seeger, Woodie Guthrie) were determined by their beliefs to celebrate the music of America's underclass. Their influence in inspiring the folk revival of the '50s created a strong current feeding early rock and roll and rock music *via* Dylan and others, but largely the identification with the oppressed was just a matter of healthy, rebellious instinct. By turning social-aesthetic judgements on their head, choosing the folk music of the poor over the entertainment and art music of the rich and comfortable, rock and roll was at a tangent to official culture. By analogy it seemed to threaten the wider political settlement even





at a time of economic security. Rock and roll was cool because, among other things, it seemed vaguely revolutionary and on the side of the oppressed, even when the musicians themselves often were not.

By virtue of their shared language and 'special relationship' the British were at first able simply to tail-end the Americans, hoping to harness the same currents of revolt and excitement, selling them on directly to local youth without first having to retool them. The great centres of British pop music (Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and London) were the ports through which the new music flowed into the UK, often in the hands of sailors coming home on leave with records bought in America. British musicians were also exposed to the music in clubs catering to American GI's themselves on leave - the Flamingo Club in London's Soho being a celebrated example. At first this Yankee music seemed simply exotic and was enthusiastically imitated, which is how Britain came to experience purist folk, jazz and blues booms from the '40s onward. Along with the music came some of the politics, and the early folk and jazz movements in Britain were often identified with currents of radicalism undergoing a revival at that time - the new left and, especially, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Glaswegian Lonnie Donegan started the ball rolling when he took time out from his day job with Chris Barber's Jazz Band to record covers of US folk songs such as Leadbelly's "Rock Island Line" under his own name. He played the music authentically, as far as he understood it, with obvious sincerity and an aura of reverence. Under his influence a generation took up washboards, battered guitars and tea-chest bass to play American country blues and hillbilly folk music. Skiffle was the immediate precursor of rock and roll and the first modern example of a mass DIY music movement among British youth, and Donegan is therefore arguably the father of British rock.

It wasn't long before others set to work refracting these American influences through native sensibilities. Slowly at first they began to interpret American music through the lens of specifically British traditions - its folk music and, increasingly

throughout the '60s, music hall. Even Donegan started to sing music hall, going to the top of the charts with "Does Your Chewing Gum Loose Its Flavour on the Bedpost Overnight?" (1959) and "My Old Man's a Dustman" (1960), to the disgust of his original fans.

Around the same time an obscure Liverpool skiffle group, The Quarrymen, were mutating to become The Beatles, who turned out to be peerless when it came to synthesising American Motown, R'n'B and country music with, first, British music hall and, later, the whimsy and proto-dadaism of Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll and William Heath Robinson - all of this topped off with a slice of working class sarcasm. Impish at first, their humour became more cynical and political by the day. From these ingredients Lennon and McCartney concocted the formula for Merseybeat and, later, a more or less politicised Britpop blues, folk and psychedelia, all of which was successfully exported back to America throughout the '60s. The cross-pollenisation between America and the UK which resulted laid the foundations for the explosion of rock music on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the rest of the decade.

The first difference affecting the Germans is that, in contrast with the picture in Britain and America, they had few native traditions of their own to fall back on, at least not in their immediate past. Almost everything connected with their parents' culture had been rendered untouchable by its association with Nazism. Exceptions were made for the likes of Eisler and Brecht, who had spotless anti-Nazi credentials, but with the country divided by the cold war, even here the question of Stalinism was raised. After Krushchev's speech at the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in February 1956 denouncing Stalin, and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in the following October, people were less inclined to identify with Communism. Stockhausen had an excuse note as he had already separated himself from recent German culture, at least when he wasn't taking it apart on *Hymnen*. Instead he reached back to the tradition of the German enlightenment, before the rise of the





militarist nationalism of the 19th century that eventually fathered fascism (though his technocratic vision had its own problems).

The modernist, 'degenerate' art pilloried by the Nazis at the 1938 *Aktion Entartete Kunst* exhibition was obviously exempt from the curse, making it possible for musicians to harness its extremism, primitivism and abstraction for themselves. On the musical fringes, Schoenberg and Webern could be referred to, having also been targeted by the fascists for their artistic 'degeneracy', though more obviously modern composers overshadowed their reputation. Brecht and the modernists at least agreed that art was a way of interrogating and even changing reality, that art should be critical and not just a way of shovelling more shit into the entertainment mill. To that extent these traditions were attractive to those aware of them. But these exceptions taken together still didn't leave much in the way of a *popular* tradition to draw on.

In Germany the generation gap had real resonance. The denazification programs imposed by the allies at the end of the war were hypocritical and tokenistic, and anyway were carried out only half-heartedly. Plenty of questions about the previous generation's allegiances remained unasked and unanswered. The older generation remained deeply suspect, cultural untouchables. In this way the Nazi legacy inserted a wedge between the generations.

In most places appeals to youth were simply a way of flattering young consumers into handing over cash while avoiding taking sides in real conflicts. The Who's Pete Townsend appointed himself poet laureate of this phoney war, while Dick Hebdige and Simon Frith built a school of market research on its foundations, and Paul Weller, Paolo Hewitt and Oasis are its mouthpieces today.

There is a deep affinity between this idea and the needs of the market, which also demands that its products be (superficially) brand-spanking new and in denial of history - the story of generations. In Germany on the other hand it was genuinely difficult to avoid the demand for the new, as the culture of your parents could be referred to only with hostility or, at a push,

ironically. Almost everything about the past was made to feel awkward, if not actually complicit. If in doubt, mainstream German culture was best avoided.

Jettisoning the bulk of national culture in this way might easily have meant that young Germans would be reduced to scavenging on the scraps of Anglo-American rock culture. And that is just what most of its musicians did, rehashing The Stones and The Who in order to get their snotty beaks in the trough along with the rest. But not all succumbed so easily. The question mark hanging over traditional German culture really would have put an end to idiomatic German rock altogether if it were not for another, decisive factor: the revolutionary movement of the '60s and early '70s.

The Vietnam war and the crisis of US political legitimacy, the beginnings of the winding down of the post-war economic boom, and the weakening of the Soviet regime and its satellites: these events combined in the closing years of the '60s into a powerful triangulation, producing a wave of revolutionary protests - student sit-ins, factory occupations, riots and demonstrations - in Paris and Prague, Tokyo and Warsaw, Rome, London, Berkeley and around the world. Living in the heart of Europe, German youth were central to the movement and their radicalism fed the ambition of their art, whether by inspiring communes such as Amon Düül's (which grew out of the same leftist grouping, the APO, that also produced the Red Army Faction, Rudi Dutschke, Danny Cohn-Bendit and Fritz Teufel), the agit-prop of Floh de Cologne, or just fanning the flames of cultural utopianism. The development of the new German rock music was intimately bound up with this spirit of revolt, practically inseparable from it; it was in the pivotal year of 1968 that Hans-Joachim Roedelius, Klaus Schulze and Conrad Schnitzler founded the Zodiak Free Arts Lab in Berlin to explore the popular potential of electronic music, heralding the beginning of so-called Krautrock.

Political radicalisation had the result of backing up a suspicion of German culture with a loathing of corporate McCulture, up to and including its rock music. Faust at least were clear about this. According to Péron, *"we were not happy being a deluded echo*





*of what went on in the music scenes of England and the States... Krautrock happened because we (Faust and many others) did not want any more any of the three-chords-my-baby-don't-love-me-no-more bullshit"*, and Irmler makes the same point: *"We didn't want to do any beat or rock music - that was quite clear"*. German musicians admittedly enjoyed and appreciated rock music, even if it was sometimes only as a guilty pleasure (jarring with his image as an intrepid sonic radical, Jochen Irmler was privately a fan of The Kinks and The Small Faces) but they were not prepared simply to recycle it.

What was to be done? Show business was despised as a transparent extension of corporatism and the entertainment industry. Hip musicians couldn't be seen to slavishly follow Anglo rock, they needed their own, personal means of expression. This meant that they weren't inclined to ape even obvious outsiders like Zappa, however much they listened to, or learned from, him. Cut off from both German culture and mainstream Anglo-American rock, they appeared to have no ground of their own to stand on.

Thanks to the events of 1968, music and politics became entangled and even identified. According to Irmler *"in those days, music was a strong force in underground and youth culture, it transported everything, it seemed. Music was the blood of that particular generation. It was the sound and the heart of the revolution everybody was busy planning."* Politics and music-making would sometimes collide very palpably, and not only on demonstrations: *"One morning I was sleeping and suddenly the door was kicked in and there was a man with a machine gun. He screamed at me to stand up and put my hands against the wall. Out of the window I could see loads of armed policemen, all training their guns on the schoolhouse. What had happened was that I had been driving with my girlfriend who happened to look a lot like Gudrun Ensslin from Baader-Meinhof. We had stopped for petrol in a garage and the owner had called the police."* (ZD).

In this politicised situation, in the midst of a useless and discredited culture, the way forward could only involve trying

to found a *new* culture, cut off from the immediate past and the west. It would have to be built *ex nihilo*, from the ground up and from first principles. Antipathy to mainstream rock and native German culture could lead only to resignation (settling for tailing the west) or a careless, fuck-everything utopian ambition. Not wanting to stand still, there was nowhere to go but up.

Rejecting the past, radically minded German musicians made the crucial decision to base themselves instead on the not-yet-actual future of their imaginations: *"There was nothing left for our generation, and we refused to have anything to do with the generation that came before us. We invented artificial music, music that we created in the studio on our own, music that had little to do with western music in general"* (HJI). The radical imagination of youth, imagined by some to be innate, was at least made more easily available to German youth as compensation for their divorce from their own culture.

Looked at from another angle you could say that the musicians began to reconnect with the alternative traditions of high modernism, the utopian extremes within their history but hidden as an undertow beneath the sweep of recent national culture: the Bauhaus, Futurism and Constructivism, the 'degenerate art' hated by the blackshirts. Dada reacted to the First World War by violently rejecting the official culture bound up with it in favour of chaos and revolutionary non-sense. Faust now turned to Dada, and Kurt Schwitters in particular, as a response to the absurdities of a consumer culture floundering in the midst of the collapsing politics of the cold war settlement. Where Dada had been inspired by the absurdity of war, Faust responded not only to the violence of the Vietnam war but also, in tune with their times, to the absurdity and vacuousness of the consumer culture which had grown up and perfected itself in the intervening years.

In this way a generation found themselves armed with the paraphernalia of a 20th century rock group - amplifiers, multi-track recorders and electronic effects - but no cultural vocabulary to draw on, at least none they felt comfortable with. Many took what seemed the only path left, starting from scratch to create a new musical grammar based on the instruments





and technologies to hand: despite its technical sophistication, Krautrock was a back-to-basics movement. Formally modernist and alarming, often emotionally primitive and direct, Krautrock set out to be the folk music of the electronic age.

This reasoning applies to Faust as much as it does their contemporaries. Arguably it covers the basics, but when we get close to the particulars it may be a little too neat. Only a minority of German musicians took the radical option, and even fewer among the audience followed them; Faust were barely recognised in their own country, finding much better support in the UK and, eventually, the US and Japan. The tendencies I have described apply, at best, only to a current within German music, though it represents far and away the most interesting current from a musical point of view.

Things become messier still when we consider Faust's position in relation to that current. They were obviously a product of their time and milieu, but they tried as best they could not to be a *typical* product. For example, where others made a point of lining themselves up with the avowedly modern Stockhausen (Can and Kraftwerk paraded their connections), Jochen Irmler at least claimed to find his music 'confusing', preferring Mahler and Greig, whose touch arguably left its mark on Faust. While others looked wholly outside Germany for their ethos - into space, drug fuelled ecstasy, eastern mysticism or cybernetic futurism - Faust's very name paid indirect homage to the greatest figure in the German literary tradition and the romantic revolt against technology and balmy rationalism (despite the fact that Goethe had been lionised by the Nazis). To many of us Faust will always seem the most German of German groups, but slotting them into a neat, conveniently nationalist drama would not be easy.

Growing out of the same turmoil as their contemporaries, rooting themselves in the same responses, Faust tried to stand outside every tradition, even those closest to themselves. They did so as a matter of principle, believing that to do otherwise might close off interesting territory. Jochen Irmler said that the hardest thing for Faust was *"not to lose our way. I mean, nothing is easier than to play rock and roll or, as is now the*

*case, minimalistic electronic music. I personally think that it's the hardest thing not to succumb to the zeitgeist."* Somewhere between history and Faust's perverse relationship to it lies the truth of the group's history and their unique spirit.



# On Currywurst

> *The history of Faust is basically of two little German groups playing in Hamburg, one man - Uwe Nettelbeck - and a social situation, Europe in 1968.*
>
> ***Jean-Hervé Péron***

> *We... always ate Currywurst. One day Rudolf didn't want to eat Currywurst any more. So we had to try to get rich and famous.*
>
> ***Zappi Diermaier***

From Jacobin France to Bolshevik Russia, revolutionary opportunities have opened up when divisions among the ruling class allowed the mob to take the stage. Fittingly, then, Faust emerged as the result of a row in an international corporation.

In the late '60s the German division of Polydor specialised in producing some of the world's most vacuous middle-of-the-road tat. Their biggest stars were Bert Kaempfert and the James Last Orchestra, who specialised in turning the pop music of the day into even more easily digestible light-orchestral sound bites, all played in swift rotation. It began to dawn on a few people in the parent organisation that there might be more to German music than this. Alarmed at the thought of un-mined potential, executives at Polydor International (who had just lost The Beatles from their roster) were anxious to exploit opportunities they thought the German division was missing out on, so company man Horst Schmolzi approached a certain Uwe Nettelbeck for a little help.

Nettelbeck was a Teutonic Tony Wilson or Malcolm MacLaren, though better read, with better taste and less cynical. Admittedly, none of that would be hard to achieve, but Uwe had wit and style in spades. He had worked for the satirical magazine *Pardon* and had been an editor at *Konkret*, the radical journal where Ulrike Meinhof had herself worked as an editor and star columnist before graduating to more tangible forms of criticism; Ulrike's husband, Klaus Rainer Röhl, who founded *Konkret*, later wrote an account of those years under the title "Fünf Finger sind keine Faust" - Five Fingers are not a Fist. Uwe himself had the dubious honour of once having been denounced by Meinhof as a left reformist who had helped turn the magazine into an instrument of counter-revolution. When he couldn't find a magazine prepared to publish his articles about the political trials that followed the student disorders of 1968, Nettelbeck began to branch out as something of a cultural entrepreneur, particularly in film, capitalising on his contacts to promote counter-cultural events and projects.

Polydor's pitch to him was simple. They wanted a völkisch Rolling Stones, Kinks or Small Faces, a German super-group to compete at the pinnacle of the market internationally. Better still, they wanted an electronic Beatles. In support of this ambition they were ready to throw money at Nettelbeck if only he could put such a group together. If they had some success with the project perhaps it would galvanise the German division into taking a more positive attitude to the home market. With his hip credentials, sophisticated taste, and his contacts among the artists and cognoscenti of the day, Uwe Nettelbeck must have seemed an excellent prospect.

Nettelbeck first approached a friend in Hamburg for suggestions - underground filmmaker Hellmuth Costard, whose *Besonders wertvoll* caused a scandal in 1968 when it was banned for showing a talking cock criticising the recent Film Promotion Act. It happened that Costard was neighbour to a young French musician, the bass player, singer, Dylanophile and nudist, Jean-Hervé Péron. Péron was then playing in the group Nukleus along with guitarist Rudolf Sosna and saxophonist Gunter





Wüsthoff. The three of them had already provided music for films by Costard and Hans Hemmingholz. Together they became Nettelbeck's first levy of recruits.

As this proto-Faust lacked both drummer and keyboard player, Nettelbeck asked them if they knew anyone who might be interested in filling the vacancies. They did. Two drummers, Zappi Diermaier and Arnulf Meifert, and keyboard player Hans-Joachim (Jochen) Irmler were playing in another local group, Campylognatus Citelli, named after a flying dinosaur whose remains were first discovered in southern Germany. At its height the group employed as many as ten members, including three drummers playing together.

According to Irmler, the two halves of what would become Faust had already played together: *"Zappi met a girl who knew some musicians in another loose band and we were introduced. We got together in an old underground air raid shelter to rehearse. It was more like a damp, narrow and very long corridor"* - he even reveals an uncharacteristically reticent side to the group which, fortunately, didn't extend to their attitude to the music they were about to make: *"The corridor was so long we never went right to the end as we were frightened about what we might find there"*. In this version of events (recounted in the sleevenotes to the 2006 re-release of *Faust IV* and in interview with Ed Baxter) everything happens in reverse - the group form and approach Nettelbeck to manage them, Nettelbeck then snares Polydor. Péron claims on the contrary that the two sides had never met before. In either case, Nettelbeck's offer welded the two together.

Because it is rarely remarked on it is worth making the point that Faust was always a divided body of two parts, schizophrenic from the start. Many of the group's achievements stem from the way they married the personalities of the two original groups. Nukleus were lyrically and compositionally driven; Péron and Sosna were both singer-songwriters, lyricists and composers with a taste for the absurd, while the other wing of the group were more interested in texture, ambience and acoustics, sonic experimentation and improvisation. Nukleus were Dada-

inflected singers and players, while Campylognatus Citelli were Surrealist noiseniks with, as their name hints, a line in sonic brutalism and excess.

The new group spent half a day in their rehearsal space, an old air raid shelter in the Sternschanze district of Hamburg, recording the demo that clinched the deal with Polydor (**Party #4** / **Lieber Herr Deutschland** / **Demo**). Not only did the company give them the go-ahead, Nettelbeck talked them into financing one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken with a new group; try to imagine a major label today agreeing to provide an unknown and unproven group with a dedicated recording studio and living quarters as well as





allowing one of their foremost engineers to be permanently on hand. But these were the '60s and there was, as they liked to say, 'something in the air' - namely the lure of super-profits if the group could be broken internationally. There was a great deal to play for - enough, at least, for Polydor to be willing to invest some seriously high stakes.

The new studio was set up in a converted schoolhouse in the village of Wümme, forty kilometres outside Hamburg on the Lüneburg Heath. The area had been cleared of its forests in the Middle Ages to provide firewood for salt production. More recently it had been the site of Germany's unconditional surrender to the Allied Command in May 1945. As for the engineer, Nettelbeck quickly recognised that his group couldn't realise their most advanced ideas without significant technical support, so he lobbied to have Kurt Graupner seconded to the project from Polydor's classical label, Deutsche Grammophon. Graupner is described by everyone involved as a technical genius, endlessly patient and with an imperturbable 'can do' attitude. At first the group moved into the house of the father of Uwe's wife, Petra, at nearby Schwindebeck, waiting for the studio to be sound-proofed and equipped. As soon as the new studio and accommodation were ready, the group moved in and set to work.

As for the individual members of the group, Jean-Hervé Péron was a romantic, a child of '68 who busked his way across Europe and ended up in Germany in pursuit of a woman, a certain Almuth. Rudolf Sosna, part-Russian, was the conscience of the group, a poet and artist with serious ambitions: *"he drank a lot, he worked a lot, he played a lot. He was an extremely exhausting man"* (JHP). Gunter Wüsthoff *"[came] from Friesland, a peculiar place where the people could never be tamed or subdued neither by the kings or invaders nor by the constant bad weather and the endless flat land. He did not talk much, made dry jokes, was quietly brainy and carried a gun. He played guitar and knew loads of jazz chords. He played sax also, inventing a technique consisting mainly in numbers and maths rules"* (JHP). Wüsthoff had also studied at a fine art school in Hamburg. Jochen Irmler was a designer and graphic

artist who had learned to play flute, sitar, clarinet and piano as a youth before fleeing to Hamburg to escape his home in Bodensee. Studious and aloof, he was a naturally gifted keyboard player with a talent for technology and a passion for noise. Arnulf Meifert was an unusual combination of set designer, conceptualist, intellectual and rock drummer, while Zappi Diermaier, born Werner Franz Diermaier in Gutau, Austria, was *"a reincarnation of a taxi"* (JHP). Nettelbeck was fast-talking and fast-thinking, literate and imaginative; in the context of the group *"he was the main man as far as the structuring of the whole project was concerned"* (HJI).

From the outset Faust agreed a constitution emphasising group democracy, extending to Kurt and Uwe, and a policy of 'anything goes'. Irmler outlines the group's democratic policy, saying that they wanted to *"move somewhere together where everyone can live out his preferences, yet has to stand his ground against the other five - which sometimes led to real fights, but it was and is a concept I recommend."* Diermaier paints the method and group interaction in similar terms: *"The concept was to get all our musical influences, ideas and inspirations together in this remote atmosphere, to let them crash and boil and create something new out of it."*

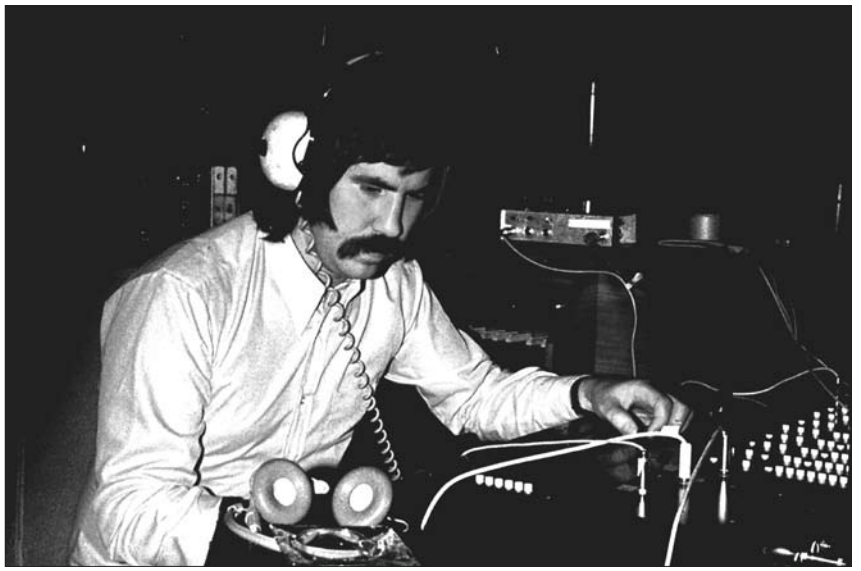
As with any laboratory experiment, external influences had to be excluded, so record players and radios were banned. The group deliberately cut themselves off from other groups too: *"there was really no relationship between Faust and the other [German] groups... We had always a still wind blowing in our faces... we had to go our special way, not looking at what other groups were doing"* (HJI).

According to Péron, the final clause of the group's constitution demanded that there should also be *"no compromises; we do absolutely what we feel like and no consideration of any consequences no matter what."*

In pursuit of a specifically sonic democracy the group devised techniques to allow everyone equally to control the group sound so that they could make truly collaborative music. Irmler, Sosna and Wüsthoff had ideas for a new kind of processor to help them







achieve this, and Graupner came into to his own by designing the necessary hardware and overseeing its construction at Deutsche Grammophon's experimental workshops.

Functioning as both synthesisers and multi-effects units, these devices were the group's secret weapons, the notorious Faust black boxes. Made of perspex, they were about a meter long and had twenty controls, a patch bay, and pedals to control tone and pulse generators, a ring modulator, filtering, equalisation, distortion, reverb and delay, as well as allowing external processors to be connected inline. The units also embodied unique effects designed by Graupner to allow the user to manipulate sound in stereo space. Crucially, they could be wired together to let group members control and modify each other's sound, allowing Faust to create collectively in a way that had been all but impossible before. Kurt also created control units to modify the studio's Studer recorder, increasing the number of tracks Faust could use from eight to twelve, expanding their canvas even further.

As important as the black boxes were to Faust's sound, they can't compare with the social setup at Wümme and the fact that the group could live and work there uninterrupted. A small

control room, a kitchen and communal living area supported the studio space, and there were separate bedrooms for the band's accommodation. The building was in the shape of a flattened 'H', with the studio at one end, living quarters at the other, and a kitchen and other amenities in between. It was wired to allow instruments to be played more or less anywhere, and the group would often record with members in different rooms, sometimes even lying alone on their beds as they improvised. Tape machines were running almost continually to capture every idea, any of which could subsequently be edited or mixed in with other material.

The decisive factor was that the studio was available day and night. This allowed Irmler, Sosna and Wüsthoff to live semi-nocturnal lives, spending many nights, razor blades in hand, repurposing the material recorded during the day to create the collages that pepper their greatest releases. Such total access to, and control over, the recording environment was almost unheard of for a rock group.

In short, Polydor's ambition landed Faust with the perfect environment for making a new kind of music. The role of the studio in this new setup was no longer to capture music existing prior to, apart from, or independently of the act of recording. At Wümme the studio was used to make music that had never been heard before and could not easily be repeated by the band, if at all, turning the studio and its technology into the main instrument of composition and sound generation.

The concept of the studio-as-instrument is now a commonplace, even if its implications are still far from being completely understood. Thirty years ago the idea was considered controversial outside of sound laboratories in university music departments and the big broadcasting corporations - the BBC, RTF and RAI - with only a few examples in rock music. Faust's achievement was not only to have helped breathe life into the idea, to test it and introduce it into the culture - arguably they did much to develop and perfect the art and logic of how the studio could be used. In Jochen Irmler's words: *"we were, if you want*





*to call it like that, pioneers for the emancipation of sound, to free sound from it's enslavement to given structures."*

Under the influence of Daevid Allen, who had taken up the idea from Burroughs and Terry Riley in Paris, The Soft Machine had already explored the use of tape montage, loops and studio composition in works such as their 1969 performance piece, *Spaced,* and on the album *Third* (CBS, 1970). The influence of Zappa is even more apparent. He worked extensively with these ideas in his workshops at PAL, Studio-Z and, later, the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen (UMRK), also combining radical tape manipulations with rock aggression, though building his music from more carefully considered elements too, even orthodox ideas about composition, and incorporating any and every kind of musical element, style or quotation.

The Beatles were crucial to shifting the boundaries of possibility. With a little help from George Martin they introduced new textures and techniques that were soon imitated by others. The radicalism and ambition of tracks like "Tomorrow Never Knows" and "Strawberry Fields Forever" (certainly when compared to the rest of the popular music of the time), and the fact that these tracks were still hugely successful with their audience, was bound to give confidence to others to go further. In a parallel universe Teo Macero helped create some of Miles Davis's most expansive music by working up raw session recordings with heavy splicing and editing applied *post hoc*.

The development of disc and tape recording changed the identity of music slowly but irrevocably over the course of a century in which the focus of music shifted from performance, live and in real time, to a reliance on studio craft and an approach previously associated with painting - gradualism, the careful preparation of materials, and trial and error procedures. Similarly, the base resources of music, the sounds out of which it is made, were transformed. No longer bound to traditional instruments, the conventions of folk music, the blues, or the limitations of conventional notation and ideas of composition, in principle at least musicians could now work with every possible permutation of noise directly, taking existing sounds

and manipulating them iteratively, feeding them back for further treatment, processing and reorganising them over and again until they achieved the results they wanted, results that were not necessarily even imagined before they were produced.

The relationship between the musician and his music no longer had to be mediated by traditional musical skills, let alone by a score or communal practice, implicit or explicit. Now it was possible to work directly with sound using the new skills required by the studio. All of this depended on the development of new technologies. But if technical changes were the premises of this acousmatic revolution[1], it nevertheless took time before appropriate conclusions began to be drawn in practice; we are still drawing them today. Faust were among the first to orientate

*1 The term 'acousmatic' dates back to Pythagoras, who would lecture to students from behind a screen so that they wouldn't be distracted by irrelevant visual information. It is used to describe music where the source of the sound is hidden or obscured by the way it has been treated, so that the source is unrecognisable or, more accurately, irrelevant. In acousmatic music the focus is on the sound produced, and not on the process, event or instrument that produced it. For example, a CD of acousmatic music is considered as a complete and authentic musical object in its own right, rather than a representation or copy of a separately existing musical reality - for example, a concert. Such a recording is not thought of as an imperfect copy of the music, but as the music itself. The CD is not a copy, but an original.*

themselves seriously in this new world, and it was the set-up at Wümme that made this possible. Perhaps we can also sense the influence of Nettelbeck who, with his appreciation of film and involvement with filmmakers, may have helped steer the group toward approaching their music cinematically, as a material product constructed frame by frame in the workshop.

Along with new technologies and the unique social situation at Wümme, other forms of experimentation were tried. Jochen reports that in the early days the group *"played 'Blue Danube'... And to make sure that it sounded different from any version you might have in mind, everybody had to play the instrument that he least knew."* Such an approach was not new in itself - Sun Ra had done something similar on his album *Strange Strings* (Saturn, 1967), for example - but it was rare for a rock group to take such extreme measures.

Life at Wümme ran happily, if not always smoothly. Other musicians used the studio in Faust's company - Slapp Happy, Tony Conrad, the US group Moon, Hamburg group Tomorrow's Gift, and Dieter Meier, later of Yello: *"We knew that with the studio at Wümme we had a real treasure on our hands, the means of production, as we put it in those politically agitated times, which we wanted to share with others"* (HJI). Faust not only hosted these visits but joined in where appropriate, playing on key releases by Tony Conrad, discussed later, and with Slapp Happy on their albums *Sort Of* (Polydor, 1972) and *Acnalbasac Noom* (Recommended, 1980).

The building was usually shrouded in smoke as a result of the grass and hashish consumed. Graupner claims to have been regularly stoned even as a non-smoker simply through sharing the same air as the group and their friends. Smoking in the studio was eventually banned when the engineer convinced Faust with the unlikely story that the tape machine heads were being destroyed by the toxic atmosphere. Plenty of drink was consumed too, fine wines and cognac being preferred. All the while Péron looked after the dogs and wandered the grounds naked in sun, wind and rain.

Nettelbeck obligingly served up premium liquid LSD, sourced from elite Swiss laboratories. After indulging, Zappi was known to wander off to the village pub to meet the locals in nothing but baggy white underpants. Even at Wümme the titanic Diermaier had a knack of standing out from the background,: *"I had a big dog and most days I would go for long walks through the surrounding swamps. I'd wear this long black Count Dracula cloak, and as I was very big and the landscape in North Germany was very flat I probably drew a lot attention."* Then there were the nights spent driving Nettelbeck's sports car in the moonlight around the nearby military firing range. Speeding through country lanes, the partygoers, high on acid, leaned out of the car doors competing to see who could get their head closest to the road. Thirty years later Uwe would still be complaining about the vehicles written off during this period.

On one occasion Faust and friends brought an Elvis impersonator back to the studio after a night's drinking to provide vocals for covers of "Don't Be Cruel", "Hound Dog" and "Teddy Bear", though it is too much to hope that those particular sessions will ever be released. Throughout the time at Wümme the fun was punctuated by a routine of recording and studio work. Occasionally there were periods where little or no work was done, and nothing achieved except the creation of a certain mood.

All the while Nettelbeck struggled to herd his pack of fleas in some kind of direction and keep the label off their back. Every so often they would send a tape of work-in-progress to Polydor, though these were as likely to contain studio experiments or location recordings as they were any kind of group playing or rock music; one was made up exclusively of recordings of the traffic passing through Wümme on a single day, another contained *"pure blasts of noise, the sound of someone cleaning dishes and us all trying to impersonate a female choir."* (HJI). Nettelbeck nevertheless managed to persuade the label that they were making progress. For an entire year he succeeded in keeping Polydor at bay. Finally they could be put off no longer. They demanded to hear the results of their investment, so the





group hurriedly convened to assemble their first album: *"we tripped and took LSD, and we had to make the record in one night"* (ZD).

# Clear / Faust

*The alchemist is the most worthwhile kind of man that exists. I mean the man who out of something slight and despicable makes something valuable, even gold itself. This man alone enriches, other men only give change.*

***Nietzsche***

*Polydor 1971*

From the music through to its extraordinary cover, Faust's debut was thoroughly alarming: a psychedelic hand grenade tossed into the stagnant pond of the (then still emerging) prog-rock imagination. Although not without musical precursors - Zappa and The Soft Machine's extremities, Varèse and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop - the package as a whole was too strange to be completely absorbed by minds weaned only on rock music or the purely musical avant garde. Its nearest relatives are perhaps not musical at all but lie in the writings of Burroughs and Joyce and in the art of the Surrealists. That, at least, is the only reason I can imagine why this record wasn't recognised

immediately and widely as a landmark production of the new spirit of the age. Channelling the spirit of Dada and Surrealism through a science-fiction imagination, radical to the core and wildly innovative, on this album the group borrow from near and far to create something which had never really been heard before, even when the elements it was built from were themselves sometimes familiar. Recorded while the National Guard were shooting students at Kent State University, this is a revolutionary record in proportion to its time.

Even before playing the record there is the sleeve to consider, not just competing with the music in ambition but introducing themes and images that would become identified with Faust down the years. Whoever designed it (and it is not hard to imagine Nettelbeck inspiring the concept and overseeing its production, though the entire group claim to have had their say, and Irmler specifically claims that the original idea was his) they want the buyer to know that the music inside will be different to anything else in the racks of even the most elite boutique or head shop.

The sleeve is transparent apart from the group's name, a smattering of credits and an X-Ray of the fist of a friend of the band, filmmaker and local bar owner Andy Hertel, raised in a militant's salute. The record within is pressed on transparent vinyl and is plain except for a silver label on which details are embossed rather than printed (originally there was to have been no label at all, but that proved impossible to arrange). The sleeve notes are printed on a separate transparent plastic insert. Meifert claims that the inclusion of the insert was a mistake, a concession that spoiled an otherwise pristine design. John Peel claimed to have bought his copy on the strength of the cover alone, and it would be surprising if that wasn't true of many others besides.

The sleeve looks like a modernist icon and hi-tech gadget combined, as well as slyly detourning the idea of a corporate logo. Meifert insists that the idea of using the name 'Faust' included from the beginning associations with Goethe's character, that the group were aware from the start of having sold their souls to the devil when they signed with Polydor, and the name was meant to

advertise this critical self-awareness. That may be so, but there is no visual suggestion of Goethe's Faust in the design of the debut album - none of the wood block prints, gothic fonts, images of pentagrams and pet familiars that turn up on future releases. These would have to wait until Recommended Records started their program of releasing the Faust Party outtakes. It seems strange that Chris Cutler of all people should so obviously de-politicise Faust when handling their identity, though there is no evidence that he did so against the wishes of the group.

The fist speaks for the group's relationship to the political upheavals of the time, drawing a line from Faust to the insurgents occupying the factories and stalking the streets of the world's cities. But it isn't used simply as an iconic index of radicalism, a trendy political badge, since it is stripped bare and exposed by the X-Rays illuminating it. Possibly Faust wanted to suggest that questions needed to be asked. Or, if you will excuse a bad joke, they could be saying that traditional leftist radicalism is dead, having failed transparently. In that case they may have a point, as the events of May '68 proved, at best, the irrelevance, and, at worst, the complicity of the traditional left of Stalinists, Maoists and Trotskyists. The shortcomings of the Maoist and Trotskyist groups can't be compared to the open betrayal of Stalinist Communist Parties such as the PCF (Parti Communiste Français), but for all of them the world had largely stood still since 1917; surely it was time to move on. In any case this isn't about the 'me too' politics of the MC5, simply striking a political pose.

Chris Cutler says that he took the image to be nothing more than a visual pun on the group's name - 'Fist', in German - in the same spirit that led Henry Cow to use a picture of a sock on their album *Legend* ('Leg End'). While that is just about plausible as an explanation of how the idea perhaps first came about, it can't conceivably exhaust the objective meaning of an image blessed with such explicit political resonances.

The transparency of the cover art and packaging speaks for ideas of emptiness, negation and art-as-a-mirror that the group would return to in years to come. Faust rarely talked about the





wider meaning of their cover designs, but they were an important part of their myth and identity from the start.

Jochen Irmler says that it is obvious what was intended by the design, claiming that the group constructed the record as a narrative *"in which we tried to disclose where we came from, to say: This is us. And so I thought: How could we better disclose this process than by making it transparent?"* In the spirit of democracy, this version of transparency allows you to peer into the group's reality, which is implicitly stable. It advertises its authenticity; there is nothing hidden and nothing to hide. But even those who think they have nothing to hide leave much hidden, especially to themselves.

Looking at the cover it is hard not to think also of the idea of reality as the void, a luminous emptiness, in the Vedic or Buddhist sense. You may also be reminded of Malevich's white squares, Mallarmé's blank pages and Cage's "4:33". Faust certainly shared the expanded sense of possibilities of Mallarmé and the decadent symbolists that led the latter to create the first open works. In a similar spirit, the Buddhist concept of emptiness is not meant to emphasise the formlessness of things before the divine act of creation, as in Mosaic theology. Rather it highlights the malleability of all determinations and distinctions, an indeterminacy which underpins a freedom and creativity that turn out to be different sides of the same coin. In this way of looking at things, the gaping emptiness of the void contains more recombinative possibilities to be explored than it does mysteries for veneration.

Certainly the idea leaves as much creative space as is allowed for by its materialist critics, who have their own candidates in mind as ultimate creative and generative realities: swerving atoms, self-motion and similar schemes for breathing life into matter. Materialism is a medal to be won at the end of a race, not a label you attach to yourself on the starting line, and it seems to me that you can suggest the over-determination of existence, its layered contradictions, just as well with the right image of transparency and emptiness as you can with, for example, a pile of junk. And if the void embodies the essence of reality,

comparing it with the world we confront every day directly suggests its ability to produce distinct, emergent universes.

Looked at another way, there is a suggestion in these images of the fullness of existence to the extent that it swallows itself to become undifferentiated and indistinct again: categories dissolve, and what appears empty is an indeterminate plenitude constantly on the brink of crystallising out. Possibly that impression has as much to do with the dream logic of the inverted world of commodity capitalism, where anything can be turned into anything else by exchange, than it does with reality as such. But even that is debatable.

Of course, cosmology now recognises that the absolute vacuum of space is nevertheless alive with latent energy, as advertised in the Upanishads and the Avatamsaka (Flower Garland) Sutra. This energy constantly creates new matter from the void then absorbs it again in a continuous process of generation. Perhaps Faust sensed that their approach to music was also a kind of engine of creation.

Lacking any structure, the transparency of the album's cover is also decentred. According to Derrida it thereby suggests the unthinkable itself. What *isn't* reflected in the cover design is the post-modernist idea of the void as absolute nullity, an emptiness that is itself empty. This is the void Beckett sensed at the heart of experience, reflected in his plays in which nothing happens - the hypostasis of reification. Alert to the threat of annihilation posed to the subject, however, Beckett himself used this nothingness as a fulcrum around which

to turn his dialectics of existence. In post-modernist hands the same nullity is made absolute – our intellectual class's homage to the perfected alienation they are stupefied enough to admire. The album cover, and Faust's presentation of themselves and their art in general, is just too pointed and disruptive to be compatible with this view, which is more in tune with the sleek, minimalist ethos of contemporary American art-rock and Japanese electronica and noise releases. In later years Table of the Elements would try coating Faust with the same veneer, but it can't happily be applied to them at the start, when their art is simply too obviously explosive to be adequately contained by a lick of gloss and a quick polish.

Transparency and emptiness raise questions about the status of the work and its relationship to its medium. What is this? Is it really music any more? Hinted at too is the ideology of the unmediated, direct and non-conceptual appearance of truth - let those with ears to hear, hear. There is a suggestion of the fragility of the group's project, its tender bones exposed. Will it survive once cast adrift onto the commercial market? Finally, there may be an idea at work of the frailty of the record as a mediator of music, of something lacking there that must be interpolated in the act of listening. Adorno compared the turning of the record player to that of a potters wheel, saying that *"for each the material is preexisting. But the finished tone/clay container that is produced in this manner remains empty. It is only filled by the hearer"* ("The Curves of the Needle", 1929). Maybe it is this demand upon the listener that Faust were referring to in their 1973 manifesto when they said that they *"would like to play for you the sound of yourself listening"*.

There is no reason why the group should have a monopoly on explaining themselves and, particularly, their work. Artists work subjectively, but they work with objective things – ideas, images, quotations, concepts, structures and forms – which have a logic and significance that may not be entirely apparent to those using them. Considering their work involves more than relaying their understanding of it. It is necessary to look beyond biography to the materials used and the way they relate to the





wider world. This hidden objectivity turns out to be more or less the unconscious of the work of art. In that spirit you can choose between the various interpretations of the album's transparency as you see fit. Perhaps something of all of them holds good.

**Why Don't You Eat Carrots?** opens the album and the group's career with the sound of a spitting, cackling electronic drone and a bass fuzz which together sound like the tearing open of the veil. The Beatles and Stones float past in the form of tape-sampled plunderphonic extracts from "All You Need is Love" and "Satisfaction", their music jettisoned like the exhausted stages of a Saturn V rocket, one of which had just taken the first men to the moon on the Apollo 11 mission. Certainly a point is being made about the music having links to rock while also being separated from or beyond it: *"It's like a compressed history of music and the idea behind it was that we would show that all this was good once, The Beatles, etc., but it was over, it was no longer enough, we demanded a complete severance with it. Now comes the noise, the new thing"* (HJI). In fact, the noise doesn't start quite yet. Instead, muffled calls and shouts intrude. The opening furore makes the lone piano that follows even more disconcerting, as the player pokes fitfully at the keyboard, without direction. For a moment, everything seems to stall.

This sense of irresolution is swept aside by the affirmative intrusion of a loping brass band playing a bastard, hiccoughing German funk. Thirty seconds of swirling choral voices then celebrate some 25th century space ritual before the funk returns. Suddenly, everything is up in the air again. The action flits abruptly between distinct phases in a way which suggests that the studio editing razors had been busy. At four minutes the brass is out of its virtual cupboard again to help play the section's key refrain, a hurtling rock workout. Already the main elements of Faust's music are laid out as triangulating forces: folk culture, the classical tradition and the academy; electronics and the foregrounding of studio composition; rock dynamics and rock's cultural references and expectations.

The song's structure tells the story of the group's relation to existing music, and is remarkably considered, but all it does is

provide a framework, and that framework could be removed without anything toppling; the track sounds wholly self-contained, without any external support needed to prop it up. **Carrots** appears to consist of sections of studio-driven group interplay and musical quotations spliced with far out electronics shrieking through echo units and screaming electronic seagulls swooping through the air like those on "Tomorrow Never Knows", produced by George Martin recording feedback through the studio headphones. At the same time, despite it being a collage of sorts, the music emerges fully-formed and is utterly convincing. With this track, rock music took its next, irreversible step into the future.

In keeping with Faust's agenda the electronics don't decorate or embellish: in places they simply take over. The sound of the album sometimes resembles a microscopic recording of the snapping, tearing and popping of the body in motion. At the same time it as easily suggests cosmic spaces, crackling plasma and vast stellar furnaces. Of course these are all natural phenomena, albeit on vastly different scales. Through a series of unhinged refractions and transformations Faust seem to aim at





capturing all of the possibilities of sound, near and far, levelling out and making all sounds equal, identifying their music with the power of sound as such, the stuff that binds music together. They destroy the aura of a rock performance, its inbuilt distance as a spectacle staged for contemplation. In their new ecology of noise different sound worlds freely combine and detach themselves in a democracy of sound that feels both immediately present to the listener and yet so unsettling that it also creates a critical distance. The new constellations of materials force the listener to reflect on what they are hearing with every leap, to consider what it is and what it means: *"during this period our project was to see if we could reduce what we were playing to a point where the listener would have to decide by themselves whether it was music or whether it was noise"* (HJI).

The routine at Wümme meant that tape machines were running more or less constantly. The conversations they picked up were as likely as anything else to be woven into the recordings, as in this case where a couple, one of them photographer Florentine Papst, discuss the carrots of the title. After some squalling electronics the woman asks *"do you find that pleasant?"* and *"do you want to step down?"*

It is hard to see why either Faust or Polydor felt the need to pretend, for example, that the first side of the debut album consisted of two distinct tracks rather than a solid slice of music (or eight tracks, or none). It is just as hard to see why anyone would believe any one of these interpretations before the rest. Perhaps it was thought that a rock audience would find at least the pretence of a degree of conventional structure more easily palatable, but so far there is no fundamental difference in structure or organisation between the first side of the album and *The Faust Tapes*. Both consist of songs and song-fragments interspersed with more heavily processed tape compositions, improvised sections, found materials and the like. At least the purist approach saved on track titles and allowed the listener the luxury of being able to imagine their own structures and dream up track names, lyrics and images to suit the material

to themselves; maybe this is just another example of the group offering up to you 'the sound of yourself listening'.

The first two minutes of **Meadow Meal** could easily have formed the second half of **Carrots**; it could just as easily stand alone as a separately identified piece or be woven elsewhere into the rest of the album's material. According to Irmler there are at least two other original Faust songs buried on side one of the album, one apparently called "Linus". With Faust the distinction between song and studio composition, structure and improvisation, music and noise, and the boundaries between discrete pieces of music, are all blurred, creating endless problems when it comes to identifying and cataloguing the components of their music or track marking their recordings. The only successful pass on dealing with the chaos they produced on their wildest recordings is Chris Cutler's re-release of *The Faust Tapes* as part of *The Wümme Years* box set, where each section of the recording is marked separately. There is a case for taking the same approach with the first album, even at the risk of dispelling some of its mystery. But then, any attempt to isolate the elements of Faust's music is ultimately bound to fail, for all of their music together is ultimately a single, unbroken body of sound.

These opening minutes offer some of Faust's most rarefied sonic mangling - a freaked out, lysergic take on BBC Radiophonic Workshop abstractions. Percussion recordings are stretched and looped, and strings are bowed while chains rattle. The result is like '50s *musique concrète* but purged of any taint of sterility, made articulate and fluid through play. In an interview with Karl Dallas, Nettelbeck elaborated on Faust's accidental relationship to the academic avant garde, saying of their music:

> *I want it to be popular… As far as terms are concerned I wouldn't like to have it in that bag with Stockhausen, Cage and all that, what you call experimental music... Just because some things we are doing nobody else is doing, it puts us in a position to be avant garde but that's just accidentally. I don't rate such terms very highly. It's just music.*

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS December 23, 1972

# Germany Calling

**IN LAST WEEK'S issue IAN MACDONALD closed with the arrival of Amon Duul II on the German scene. Since 1969 this band have recorded five albums and four singles, and established themselves as a bold, inventive organisation. In this final article MacDonald continues his appraisal of the band.**

"DANCE OF THE Lemings" crystallised the dual leadership of the band in the Chris Karrer composition "Syntelman's March Of The Roaring Seventies" and John Weinzierl's "Restless Skylight-Transistor-Child", both side-long strings of continuous ideas, neither of which are totally convincing, if readily distuinguishable stylistically.

Of the improvised tracks, the freeform "Marilyn Monroe Memorial Church" stands out as beating Tangerine Dream at their own game, whereas the remainder sinks without memorable trace.

"Carnival In Babylon" was recorded soon after the group moved out of Munich into the adjoining countryside and, whilst sweetness and light only by comparison with the three preceding records, it is certainly a more relaxed album, showing the Duul, for better or worse, trying to marry certain Anglo-American compositional ideas with their uniquely Germanic sound.

The end-product, partly the result of shaky ensemble work (German rhythm-sections tend to be either inflexible or very wobbly, and Amon Duul's can manage the extraordinary feat of being both simultaneously), leaves one wondering whether the group have any clear idea of what they want to be. Personally, I'd prefer they opted for the harmonies and time-signatures of Weinzierl numbers like "C.I.D. in Uruk" and "Kronwinkl 12" rather than open-ended rambles like "Hawknose Harlequin" and, on the evidence of their latest and most successful release "Wolf City", that's just what they're doing.

Amon Duul II are a bold and inventive organisation, and "Wolf City" shows them gaining in confidence and ability with great strides. The only reservation I have is that they may be striding towards a point at which it will no longer be possible to hear them unawares and identify them instantly as German, but this modest tendency may just be the outward manifestation of a long-deserved holiday from having borne the cause of independent German rock these five years.

Still, one can't help wishing that some of their better titles ("Gulp A Sonata", "Flesh-Coloured Anti-Aircraft Alarm", "Rattlesnakeplumcake", "Overheated Tiara", "Sleepwalker's Timeless Bridge", and "A Short Stop At The Transylvanian Brain-Surgery") concealed music of comparable inspiration. By world standards, a group to watch, even so.

The best, you'll be relieved to hear, has been reserved for last.

**Faust,** a five-piece organised 18 months ago by avant-garde producer Uwe Nettelbeck, are a single-handed justification of all the ballyhoo that's been kicked up about krautrock in recent years.

Operating from their homemade studio at Wumme, they have issued two albums of their work-in-progress of which the second, "So Far", is currently only available in Germany. The third, a double, is projected for release early next year and advance hearing of some of the tapes that might form sections of it have convinced me that it could be a masterpiece.

Suspicions that there was a whole new sound-world somewhere on the far side of "Cold Turkey" were confirmed by hearing "Meadow Meal" from Faust's first album earlier this year.

Using only self-designed equipment (no synthesizers), the group have, in this track, produced the first genuine example of rock that Britain and America could not only never have conceived (although The United States Of America came within spitting-distance of the same territory in 1968), but which they would, at present, find technologically impossible to emulate.

This is truly avant-garde music, played with a panache and an amiable humour duplicated by no other German band.

This then, is the German rock scene to date.

Future directions are already being determined even though the German press is largely refusing to take notice of its own country's music; two lines, hinted at in this article are being taken up, firstly that of the new "cosmic" bands such as Popul Vuh, Os Mundi, and Eruption and, secondly, a wave of performers of "Romantic" rock, based on nineteenth century modes, and including such names as Hoelderlin, Emtidi, Walpurgis (whose album, "Queen Of Saba", is shortly scheduled for release), Golgotha, and Wallenstein, whose leader, Jurgen Dollase, claims to be a reincarnation of the famous general of that name and clothes himself accordingly.

Both camps may well be barking up the wrong tree, since the true dilemma of German rock lies in the so-far unbridged gulf between revolutionary ideas and inadequate techniques, a problem only entirely solved so far by Faust.

German rock groups are particularly anxious to reflect their social rather than their cultural situations, making music, in the words of Holger Czukay, "that doesn't try to **show** the world better, but **makes** it better."

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**LATE ARRIVALS**

A BRIEF glance at the very newest releases and imports from Germany does little to alter the generally gloomy view of the scene portrayed in the preceding article. There's no date given for **Amon Duul's** "Disaster" double-album, recently released on BASF, and it could have been recorded at any time between 1968 and this year. Sounding no better than "Collapsing" and "Paradieswaarts", it lives up to its name.

Duisberg's **Broselmaschine,** believe it or not, are a kind of Teutonic Steeleye Span and, listening to their reading of the traditional "I Once Loved A Lass", you could be forgiven for putting them down as one more English folk-rock band. They do what they do with skill and restraint, but the final aim of the exercise eludes me.

**Wallenstein's** "Blitzkreig" (Pilz) is a tasteless exhibition of flash-rock in the manner of ELP. **Gash** sound like a rather grandiose German Wishbone Ash, and **Os Mundi,** on their Brain album "43 Minutes", present a stodgy evocation of early Colosseum and Graham Bond.

Stuttgart's **Kraan** don't sound like anybody in particular, not even themselves — but their record company, Spiegelei, is new to me and has a fried egg for a logo. I'm quite partial to fried eggs.

From what I've heard of it, **Popul Vuh's** debut album, "In Pharaoh's Garden" is conceptually par for the "cosmic" course, if rather more subdued in sound than its stablemates. Synthesizer-player Florian Fricke fails to live up to his reputation and Holger Trulzsch is a boring and clumsy percussionist on this showing.

"Canaxis 5" by the **Technical Space Composers' Crew** is an Inner Space Production dating from 1970 and released on the private Music Factory label. It features Roland Dammers and Can's Holger Czukay playing with loops, electronics, and field-recordings of Vietnamese peasant-songs — which could have been very interesting but, through self-indulgence, isn't.

**IAN MACDONALD**

**From Amon Duul to Faust's new sound-world**

**Faust: new leaders. Top, from left: Hans Joachim Irmler, Gunther Wusthoff; bottom: Werner Diermaier, Jean Herve Peron, Rudolf Sosna**

In terms of the depth and range of Faust's use of electronic processing and manipulations, one of the few viable comparisons at the time would have been with improvising electronics group MEV (Musica Elettronica Viva) on their first album, *The Sound Pool* (BYG, recorded in May 1969), and especially on their follow-up *Leave the City* (BYG, June 1970). The first album involved the better known core MEV musicians and composers; Alvin Curran, Richard Teitelbaum, Frederic Rzewski, Jeff Levine and others. Perhaps significantly, the second album was produced under the MEV imprint by a satellite unit more closely connected with the hippy and student movements of the time, consisting of Ivan Coaquette, his wife Patricia and Birgit Knabe (and, on one track, Nona Howard and Stephano Giolitti). As Rzewski explains: *"In the early '70s there were three MEV's: one in Rome, led by Alvin Curran; one in New York, where Richard Teitelbaum & I were based; and one in Paris, which was organized by the Coaquettes. Birgit and Nona were members of the Living Theatre, with whom we also hung out a lot.... The record you are talking about was a kind of hippie child who chose MEV as its identity."*

After these exercises in percussive cubism, the 'Mirror Mind' section starts out of the blue, acoustic apart from parping synthesised bass (or heavily treated electric bass) and some thinly shredded wah guitar phrases. A coherent song tucked away inside **Meadow Meal**, the feel is as delicate as that of similar passages on *The Faust Tapes* - **Flashback Caruso** or **Der Baum**. The lyrics take as their topic the *"wonderful wooden reason"* of the bourgeoisie which helps them *"stand in line, keep in line"*; at least that interpretation harmonises with the references to Voltaire in **Miss Fortune**. Perhaps someone at Wümme had been reading Adorno and Horkheimer's "Dialectic of Enlightenment" or Marcuse's "One Dimensional Man", although these ideas were almost popular at the time and it is more likely that they found their way on board through simple counter-cultural osmosis.

There is then a characteristically Faustian rapid shift of gear and the band are suddenly playing hyper-kinetic Mothers of





Invention rock, fast and bulbous. The influence of The Mothers hovers over these early recordings but Faust are less artful than their mentors; no matter how complex the music, they aim above all else for directness in communication, cutting loose any progressive rock subtext inviting you to gaze admiringly at the skill involved.

Just before the five minute mark the song's verse repeats and then there is another rapid cut. Now we are into a coda that starts with the sound of breaking storm clouds and thunder before segueing into an organ piece that evokes something like a waltz. This section too could have been tracked separately, sounding as it does like an early attempt at the sort of romantic electronic evocation of space and nature found on later recordings (such as **Run** on *Faust IV*). It would also sit quite happily on any of the records made by the post-Péron Faust of the late '90s, which is to say that it sounds as though Irmler had a hand in it.

Taken as a whole, the first side of album is an astounding piece of music which works like an orrery of rotating, overlapping lenses that take you zooming in and out of the sound, pushing you down into the dirt of raw sonic material one moment then flipping you out into silence the next. Like coming up on LSD, or during a flashback, one moment your senses are overloaded to breaking with strange new information, then you are back in the ordinary world an instant later.

Most reviewers were too wrapped up in their assumptions and old habits of listening to be in much of a position to understand Faust when they were releasing their first records. One exception was Ian MacDonald, who went on to write "Revolution in the Head", a fine track by track analysis of The Beatles, and still one of the best books ever written about them. In the NME in 1972 he said of **Meadow Meal** that Faust had *"in this track, produced the first genuine example of rock that Britain and America could not only never have conceived... but which they would, at present, find technologically impossible to emulate."*

The sleeve notes claim that side two, taken up entirely by the track **Miss Fortune**, was recorded live at Wümme. Within limits, the notes are probably right. Irmler says that this side

was created by editing together some of the late night sessions the group had played just to relax after a long days work. Parts of the track feel like a hazy psychedelic jam, the sound of a free festival heard from over the hills, but with considerable studio alchemy at work too, and plenty of abstract studio interventions. It opens with a steady beat and layers of distorted, fat guitars that spiral out into a frantic Velvet / Cale storm before some studio-based percussive rattling intrudes, complete with faux-operatic vocals and a scattered and hesitant piano. Things continue in this vein, percussion gathering pace until it lurches into focus as a spluttering beat. Heavily distorted brass and fizzing low frequency electronics join in beneath a tangle of voices.

At twelve minutes there's another warp-driven edit and things become more abstract still, with a distorted guitar being processed almost into oblivion, or maybe it is just the sound of tape being dragged violently over the recording heads. More voices and snatches of laughter join in. Then the song starts to slip over the edge of incomprehensibility into a realm of pristine electro-acoustics, as if the rock music of the opening movement had died and was now decomposing into sonic dust, pure sound.

We have come quite a way from the Beatles and Stones at the opening to end up just the other side of Cage and Stockhausen. The album is a furnace into which one genre after another is thrown - rock, folk, classical - their impurities burned away to see what remains. And what remains is sound itself, sound considered as the font of all possible music - universal and amoral. It is this aspect of sound that Faust manage to capture, and rarely better than on this, their debut release. The emergence of sound from silence mirrors the act of creation, a fact reflected in Hindu / Vedic reverence for the sound of OM-AUM. Faust occasionally work at just the point where sound emerges from silence and music from sound. As the journalist Pierro Scaruffi put it in a rare moment of lucidity: *"If the Indian mystics wanted to become one with Brahman, Faust the atheists tried to become one with the Big Bang."*

The side closes with some lyrics, alternate words spoken in turn by different voices in left and right stereo channels. The





references are to the enlightenment - *"I lift my skirt when Voltaire turns as he speaks, his mouth full of garlic"* - and its consequences in Vietnam and Watts: *"a street so black babies die."* We are then offered a choice: *"We have to decide what is important... a system and a theory or our wish to be free."* Guy Debord could hardly have put it better.

Then, just as we are being led rhetorically to a conclusion, everything falls away in the face of another of the group's kinetic leaps, though this time it is purely narrative: *"nobody knows if it really happened*." From the stinking breath / fart of the enlightenment to corpses festering on the streets today, society perfects the logic of rational calculation. Against it we have only the wish to be free. You might ask, 'nobody knows if *what* really happened?' We already know what happened between Voltaire and Vietnam - a few bloodily busy centuries of history. Perhaps they mean that the outcome is incomprehensible even when you understand it: incomprehensible because, absurd, it defies any meaningful logic. Maybe instead they are talking about their own music, asking whether it has relevance in a world heaped in corpses, sinking into miserable poverty on the one hand and miserable affluence on the other. Whatever the case, the album ends by pulling the rug from under the listener; the album *So Far* ends with another such lyrical reversal of perspective, as jarring as any of the transitions in the music.

In terms of structure the first album lies somewhere between *The Faust Tapes* and *So Far*. Neither a collection of songs nor a thoroughgoing tape assemblage, it has a peculiar accent, glorious in its brain-bending extremism.

Arguably it also has its flaws. Polydor had been funding the experiments at Wümme for a whole year before they called in the debt by demanding an album's worth of material for release, and it is sometimes obvious that Nettelbeck and the group assembled *Faust* in a hurry as a result (though not as hurriedly as is implied by Diermaier's claim that they completed it in a day). Possibly they were still mastering techniques they would later perfect. But it is only from the point of view of later releases that the opening salvo sounds a touch raw in places, as if they sometimes painted

with too broad a brush or worked with too narrow a palette to get all of the details they needed. Nettelbeck nevertheless justified the approach, telling journalists a few years later:

> *We've always liked the idea of releasing records which lacked conventional finish in terms of production… The music should sound like bootlegs, as if recorded by someone who passed the group rehearsing and then cut the recorded material wildly together.*

Uwe is right, of course: from a wider point of view such limitations contribute to the debut's power and achievement.

The album has the attack of rock music but none of its elastic, bluesy lyricism. All rock groups in one way or another have to stake their position in relation to the most prominent landmark on the territory, the blues, but Faust seem oblivious. Listen to some of Amon Düül's earliest recordings – the soundtrack to the film *Amon Düül Play Phallus Dei*, for instance - and you hear the influence of '60s blues. The Mothers of Invention and The Soft Machine had largely broken with the blues (although Zappa maintained good relations), but there was always a hint of rigidity and artifice in the way they arranged it. Faust, on the contrary, appear entirely fluid in their own, strictly post-blues idiom right from the start.

At the risk of sounding too dramatic, Faust's music has its political analogue in the activity of the Baader-Meinhof Group and Red Army Faction in the same period, though this should not be taken to mean that the group subscribed in any way to their politics. Since the armed revolutionaries saw the submission and compliance of the people as complete, the only proper response was both radical and spectacular; conducting outrages aimed at galvanising any residual atoms of resistance. They had no use for parliament, the trade unions or any other political institutions or processes. They ignored every reality except, arguably, the media.

Faust too seemed ready to dump all accepted procedures, applying a critique of rock's indolence by way of their own disruptive processes and interventions. The same incendiary attitude, however, has different results applied to art and politics.





The elitism of the revolutionary putschist invites repression; it ends in marginalisation and infamy, sealing off militants in the *cul de sac* of their lonely acts regardless of the furore in the press. The same idealism applied to art might be said to lead to another kind of marginalisation and infamy, but this time it has very different implications: its break with convention can open and expose the cracks in consensual reality and inspire a practical poetry pointing beyond music, back to life itself, on a grander scale.

The debut album was supremely confident in its radicalism. To many of us it remains Faust's clearest statement and their finest moment. It is a powerful achievement, opening windows onto new ways of playing and recording and beginning to decode the potential of new technologies, developing a second technik around them. If *Faust* is also a work in progress, it is still one of the recordings by which all other music should be judged. In fact it encourages judgement, making most of the other music of its time seem almost catatonic by comparison.

# So Far

*Radical art today is synonymous with dark art; its primary colour is black.*

***Adorno***

*Polydor 1972*

Sales of the first album were disappointing and it has been claimed that, a year later, there was pressure to produce something likely to shift more units. How hard Polydor were turning the screws is hard to say at this distance. There was certainly pressure from Nettelbeck, pre-empting the label's needs and steering the group to maintain the company's support. More generously you could see this as a gentlemanly attempt to keep his part of the bargain with the label, if you care for that sort of thing. Between them, Polydor and Nettelbeck both pressed for changes. Polydor were going to be hard to impress anyway. The fact that the group had been breathed into life by the parent company and not the German subsidiary

meant that the local division, with whom Uwe and the group had to deal directly, were hostile from the start.

The band happily accepted advice designed to deliver commercial success. Why not? Sosna at least was counting on wider recognition, having grown sick of currywurst. The rest of the group too were happy to try to become 'rich and famous'. But while it was understood that changes were called for, even a more commercially appealing sound, no one imagined that this would mean compromising their vision. As far as the group were concerned there is no big distinction here, only a matter of degree. For all its invention, the first album was also aimed at a rock market, and any changes were believed to be a matter of tweazing the band's proposition rather than overturning it. However it came about, *"it became clear that we now had to produce music and stop fucking about... There was more determination in the air... It was also made clear that the next album should be more accessible"* (JHP).

Around this time, shamefully, Arnulf Meifert was sacked from the band. There was even a mock trial in which Péron and Diermaier gave evidence for the prosecution. The expulsion may be connected with Nettelbeck's need to control the band all the better to steer it. Péron claims that Meifert was ousted at Nettelbeck's insistence because he asked too many questions, while Meifert says of Nettelbeck: *"I thought I was a real Marxist, while he was more of a salon Marxist."* It is even conceivable that the sacking was somehow connected to the group's new orientation, though there is no evidence to prove that.

Péron provided his own, poetically tinged justification for the rupture, saying that Meifert had to go "*because he discussed things, because he had flat buttocks and an absolutely beautiful girlfriend, because he practised everyday, because he always kept his room neat and woke up every morning to first wet a cloth he'd put in front of his room to keep the dirt out, because he played such a hard 4/4th that we had to travel into the tongue, ready to drop, ding dong is handsome top."* No one apart from Meifert himself emerges from the incident with honour. More

significantly, the event puts the group's democratic policy into perspective, highlighting its limits.

Whatever the politics of the situation and the concessions being made, *So Far* was certainly intended as a variation on the theme of the debut rather than a new departure. Unlike the first album, there are tightly constructed, separately tracked bits of music here, and even songs, but *So Far* is still coming from the same point of view. Continuity is expressed first by the cover, a matte black affair whose impenetrability is only the flipside of the debut's transparency. In the first releases the black cover was unsullied by printing, with the band's name and the album title being embossed on the front instead. And as with the debut, the record label too was embossed rather than printed. Other notes and listings were consigned to a black, white and red insert.

Apparent this time around is the suggestion that the primary reality may not be the transcendent light of the hippy dispensation but a dark and dirty primordial soup: Sumerian Apsu/Abzu, the waters of the deep before the beginning and the light. Formlessness, ugliness and amorality may turn out to be the ground on which your truth and beauty are built. Though this represents a new twist, nevertheless, just as with the transparencies of the first album, this heart of darkness, the primitive negation of form, contains the possibility of everything that exists. In particular, it contains the possibility that some disturbed guitar provocation may be more true to reality than your quasi-hymnal chorus. If so, your favourite lyrical guitar solo may turn out to be a lie, and you yourself, to the extent that you identify with it, may turn out to have no basis in reality as it is rather than as it is imagined. This raises the question asked by Sun Ra: if you are not a reality, whose myth are you?

There are echoes again of Malevich. His first *Black Square* was painted in 1915, and he returned to the theme over the years, each time with a shift in the underlying sense, but always leaning on the notion of the blackness of space as representing the cosmos into which the viewer gapes and toward which he is drawn. In Malevich's case you can sense the influence of Russian thinkers such as the eccentric Christian Socialist Nikolai Fedorov





(1829-1903), as well as the founder of modern rocketry and space exploration, Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857–1935). Both men emphasised space and the cosmos as man's natural home as well as the site not only of utopian promise, but of its fulfilment. Fedorov influenced Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, and his and Tsiolkovsky's ideas informed the Biocosmic-Immortalist wing of the Russian anarchist movement, with which Malevich was associated - a group with the wits to demand as a human right *"freedom of movement in the cosmic realms"*.

Back on earth, the album came packaged with a series of prints by Nettelbeck's friend, Edda Kochl. Each of Kochl's pictures is named for one of the tracks without necessarily bearing any other discernable relation to it - another kind of opacity. Some images evoke nature or innocent fun. Some are media themed. *Me Lack Space*, with its palm tree framed by a living room door, echoes the Situationist promise of 'the beach beneath the pavement'. Punningly, the pictures include three different representations of a Sofa. For a while I assumed that there must be a connection here with similar visual puns on the cover of Zappa's *One Size Fits All* (OSFA), which features its own sofa at the centre of the design, but Zappa's album is from 1975. As Cope noted, some of Kochl's images are unsettling; you could say that they are morally dark. In *No Harm* a man stretches out to seize a prone woman in a way that seems intended precisely to be harmful. *Mamie is Blue* shows a middle aged suburban woman leaning back on her couch as the man in the foreground writhes in ecstasy, or maybe pain. Bucolic, suburban or fantastic, the images are every bit as opaque as the sleeve. They lack judgment in the same way that matter itself lacks judgment. Cope's instinct that they are immoral confirms at least that they aren't moralistic in the ordinary sense.

Side one begins with Faust's calling card and their best-known track. The last thing to be recorded, cobbled together on a miserable day in the rush to fill the album, **It's a Rainy Day (Sunshine Girl)** is the acme of foot stomping Ur-rock. Taking off from The Troggs, The Kinks, "Louie Louie" and The Soft Machine's infernal "We Did It Again", Faust take that impulse to

the limit, distilling rock's hypnotic beat into something that today we like to call shamanic. Originally intended as a dig at moron-rock (*"we conceived that song to show the people what would happen if popular music followed the path it was pursuing"*, JHI), the track undoes its own argument. The music is pinned to the floor from start to end by a knocking bass drum that sticks firmly to the beat's centre, hammering out *"the heavy stomping dance of the suppression of evil spirits"* (from *The Divine Madman: The Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley*), sounding for all the world like a tranced-out but still militant Mo Tucker. The beat here is not so much 4/4 as 1/1.

Beefheart thought that there was nothing in music more banal than mama's heartbeat, associating a regular beat as such with dead time, but Faust's *reductio* of rock's essence is so extreme that it turns inside out under the pressure of its relentlessness and starts to throw off new colours, expanding into light. The first beat of each bar is played or treated to add an harmonic glow, a shuddering that works to restrain the headlong rush of the beat. **Rainy Day** was created around the same time as the sessions with Tony Conrad, and its rock atavism ends up mimicking minimalism's stasis. The reverb on the pitched drums creates a fizzing jews harp or didgeridoo of a drone throughout, adding to the pacific aura hovering about the storm.

The drums are soon joined by a rhythm guitar that could sit happily on the Velvet's 1969 live recordings if it had anything of Reed's choppy glamour. Instead it offers just an upbeat churning as cheerful as the day is long. Half way in there is a gust of an electronic breeze and Irmler's dreaming keyboards start winding their way through the mix, feeling effortlessly expansive and adding to the song's imperial swagger. Wüsthoff's saxophone carries the band sauntering toward the fade in style. It is as if Faust took an instant of a Beach Boys epiphany and carelessly stretched it out for the duration of a song. **Rainy Day** is also admittedly dark in its own way, in line with the theme of the album cover, but it turns out to be only the apparent darkness of paganism, beyond the queasy neon glow of civilization.





In 1966 John Lennon added a backward vocal to the closing chords of "Rain" which ushered psychedelia into the mainstream. The effect of reversing the direction of the vocal tape is to drive a wedge between listener and the everyday world by making the music pointedly indifferent to abstract time, striking a note of independence from its reality: *"When the rain comes, I don't mind."* But Lennon goes further. Following the renegade Kirilov, in Dostoyevsky's "The Possessed / The Devils", who argues against the militant Stavrogin that *"everything is good"*, Lennon's attitude is not just that it is all the same to him, rain or shine, but that it is all equally good *("the weather's fine")*. In Faust's version of this manoeuvre it is raining still. The lyrics appear to sound a repeated warning: *"It's a rainy day, sunshine girl. It's a rainy day, sunshine baby."* Sung against the music itself, however, the ostensible menace of the lyric is subverted to take on the affirmation of Lennon's warm 'be here now': *"It's a rainy day, sunshine girl - so what!?"*

The urge behind **Rainy Day** is so instinctive that Péron later said *"it's no wonder that it's been covered so often. I think that Faust... felt this ur-urge to stomp. This is an ancient and universal expression of togetherness, of belonging to the clan, joining in with the universe, of leaving your carnal envelope, actualizing kundalini, getting drunk with happiness... So Faust did a cover of this ur-urge as many did before and many after."* Arguably the song's inclusiveness reaches further than merely 'belonging to the clan'. The song is also arguably a love letter to the garage rock Faust had otherwise abandoned.

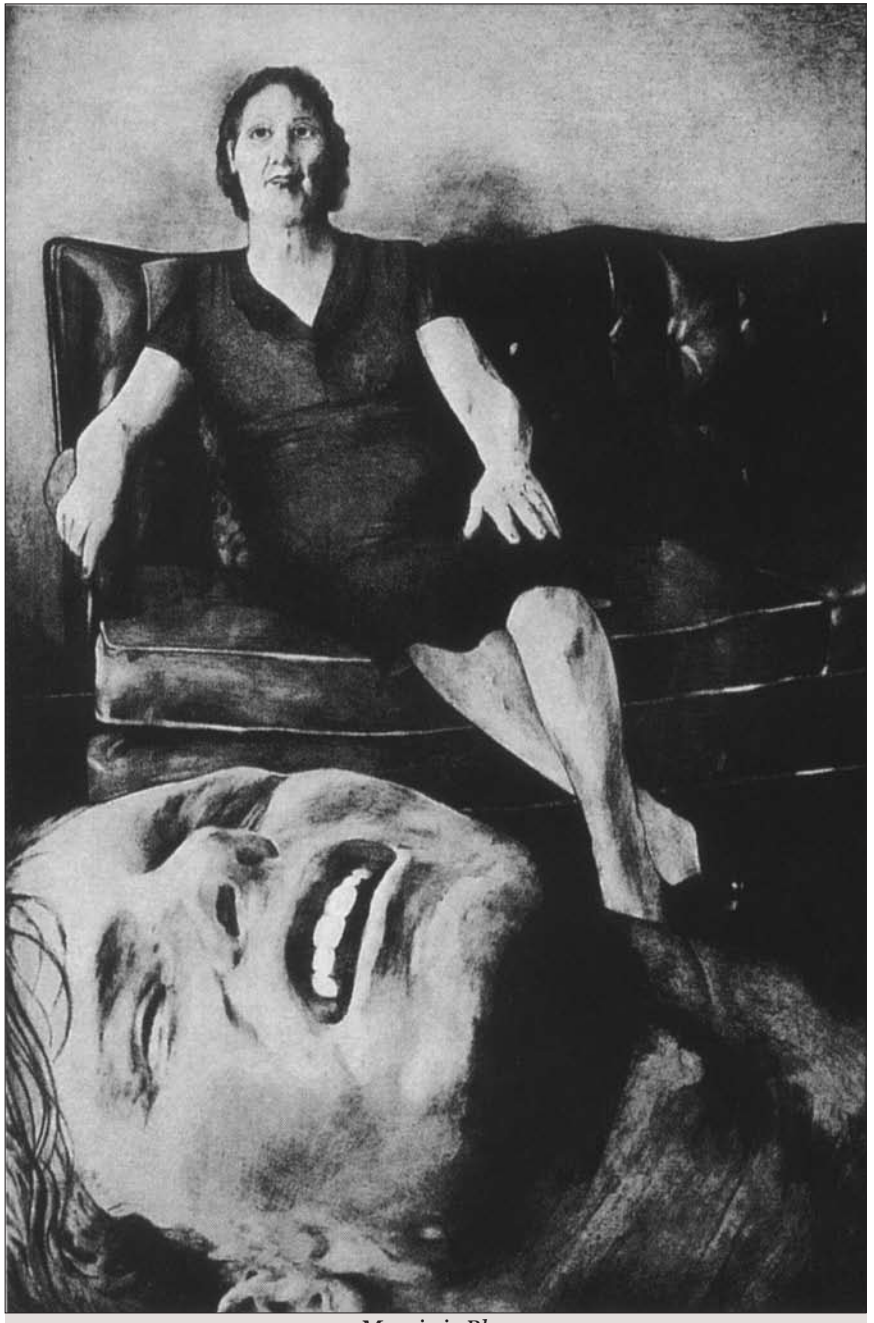
One day just after I first met my girlfriend I happened to be playing **Rainy Day** and she told me it was her favourite Can song, different from anything else she'd heard by them. A friend had made her a tape of Can's music and tacked this, thoughtfully, on the end. She spotted directly what many fail to see; Faust move in a different world to Can, working at a higher order of complexity, despite appearances. Can's dance moves, funky soundscapes and 'ethnological forgeries' polished up rock music ready for its coming role in the entertainment spectacle as the lowest common denominator of a world music synthesis

that keeps everyone happy: sonically all-embracing, you get to rock out to Karoli's guitar while wiggling your arse at the kosmische disco. Faust, on the other hand, headed, consciously or otherwise, for the overthrow of rock's cosy praxis, not its renovation.

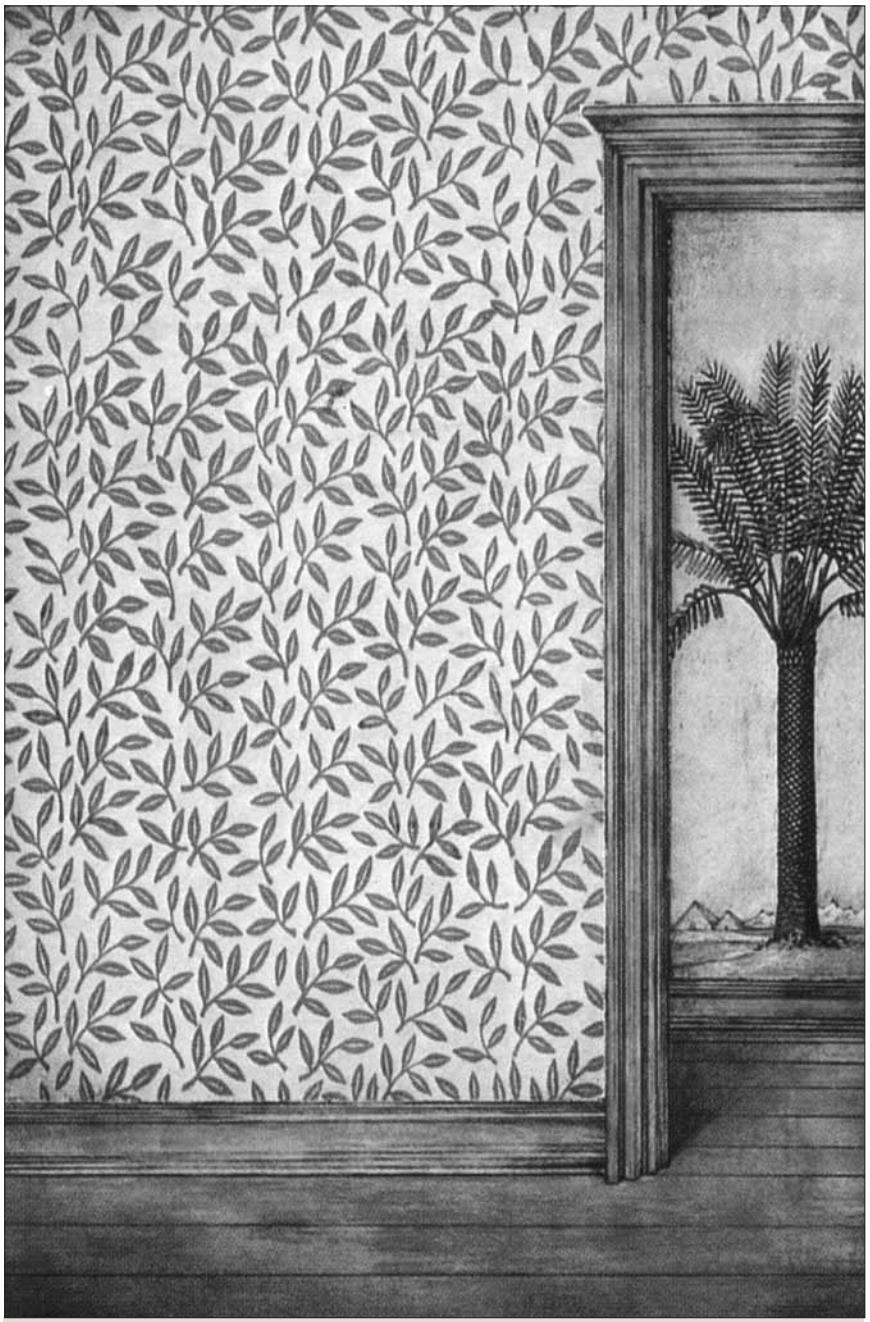
John Bender created a minimal electro version of **Rainy Day**, "27B4", for his album *I Don't Remember Now* (Record Sluts, 1980). The Homosexuals recorded a straight cover or tribute, as did Alan Smithee (aka Martin Brauner of S/T) on his album *Music for a Small Niche Market* (Get Happy, 2005). In "C'est une Journée de Pluie", DDAA (Déficit Des Années Antérieures) bravely stripped out the rhythm to turn the song into a groaning echo chamber shudder, sounding better than you would guess from that description. The album *Crumb Duck* (World Serpent, 1993), a collaboration between Nurse With Wound and Stereolab, included the track "Animal or Vegetable (A Wonderful Wooden Reason)", essentially a version of **Rainy Day**. Stapleton breathes life into the normally anodyne Stereolab, creating a rampant version of the song with a metallic, futurist sheen. Note the sly reference to the first album in the song's title too.

**On the Way to Abamae** begins with intimate, baroque guitar tracery, soon joined by benign keyboards. This is music to listen to while staring through a rain washed window on an overcast day. You might have expected this recording to end up woven into something vast and inclusive according to the usual studio practice of the group, but this is *So Far,* and here it is presented alone in its introverted glory. On the one hand this leaves it feeling orphaned, adding to its melancholic effect. At the same time, sandwiched between the intensity of **Rainy Day** and the fury of **No Harm**, it makes a perfect fulcrum around which the first side of the album turns; not so much an oasis in the desert as the calm at the centre of a storm.

*Abamae is a land of notes and numbers*
*Regime: Extreme anarchy*
*Motto: babanam kevalam*
*How to get there: there are several methods to get there, none to return, so think twice before heading for Abamae. Here's one - in*



*Mamie is Blue*



*Me Lack Space*

*summertime in Schangtrup, Tibet, in fresh snow you calmly run chanting "rund ist schön, schön rund, schön ist rund, ist einfach schön". Listen to your feet and keep running. It's after the third bend. (**JHP**)*

**No Harm** is the first track in the Faust catalogue to feel like a real rock song, as opposed to a collage, sketch, sonic mandala, a lullaby or a cosmic joke. It is a *bona fide* song, albeit a fucked up and unusual one; to that extent, at least, Nettelbeck's pressure on the group was paying off. Picking up from **Abamae**'s melancholy, **No Harm** opens with brass, keyboard (another church organ: *"I was very much inspired by the church organ"*, HJI) and drums, playing austerely in some grand ceremony until the squealing of the synthetic seabirds from the first album announces a stepping up of the pace two minutes in, though it turns out to be only a change from a stroll to a brisk walk. The brass section here sounds as though it has received some insurrectionary studio treatment. At three minutes in there is a whiplash tape edit; a strangled guitar note introduces a second gear change and the song's refrain begins. Bass and drums are almost funky by the time Péron chimes in with another stab at Faust's Zen lyricism: *"Daddy, take the banana - tomorrow is Sunday!"*

In the performative theory of truth, saying that something is true amounts to nothing more than banging the table for emphasis while talking. In **No Harm**, Faust reverse the idea and allow a kind of meaning to emerge from just such a banging, insistent action. Just as you can turn any phrase into nonsense by repeating it to yourself often enough, it turns out that you can turn nonsense into sense if you insist on it having a meaning and repeat it insistently enough - though it emerges only half-way, as a kind of intuited, pre-conceptual 'sense'. The louder the lyric is barked, the more its absurd command is transformed into a categorical imperative, as if there were nothing more natural than the idea of taking a banana 'because' tomorrow is Sunday.

At a push this is related to the techniques Buddhists use to 'point out the true nature of mind'. The Zen master clouts his student's head to wrench him out of regular habits of thought,

allowing him for an instant to see into the nature of things beyond verbal categories. Alternatively, the student might be set an insoluble puzzle, a koan, where the aim is to confront the student's ideas directly and consistently with recalcitrant reality until those ideas evaporate in a flash of insight. In some schools of Sufism alchemy was used like this - as an impossible praxis whose aim is not the wealth of the profane world but a new-found richness of vision.

In **No Harm**, the more Jean-Hervé shouts, the more you feel clouted. The intention is not to bludgeon you senseless into a pre-conceptual, hippy community with the cosmos, but to open a chink in the armour of habitual perception through which you might get a glimpse of something new.

As the track builds, bass and guitar grow wilder until they are on the verge of tearing the song apart. At something just over nine minutes the song practically stops in its tracks, but it turns out that it is only taking a few steps back before hurling itself onto the deck in a crash landing. A crescendo of ripped and distorted guitars merges with an almighty howl. The music throws itself against the walls of reality with all of its might, bursting to break through before falling down exhausted at the end. Fortunately, with the original vinyl release at least, you have time to get your breath back before proceeding, as this is the last track on side one of the album.

Turning the vinyl over, the album's title track opens side two with a reversed tape that sounds like modulated feedback, then a cacophony of plucked and scraped strings intrude in the spirit of some of Zappa's percussive concoctions. The intro soon gives way to a snooty riff with a distinctive three note guitar / two note trumpet punctuation which, together with workman-like mid tempo drumming, forms a framework to build on. Layers of keyboards, synthesisers and guitars are then draped around the frame one after another.

Most fans would think the track slight and elliptical by Faust standards, though you might agree with Peter Blegvad that the group are reinventing Kraftwerk here, albeit a cooler and more organic version. For reasons too obscure to guess, someone





at Polydor decided that it would make a good single release. Then again, maybe the group pushed it forward, as they seem especially fond of it, returning to it over the years as a basis for live improvisation and studio invention. The revived Faust were still playing it at concerts in 2004, more than thirty years after it was recorded.

**Mamie is Blue** is one of the obscure gems in Faust's catalogue, a masterpiece of industrial electronics. One of the most arresting songs they ever recorded, it could easily be the model for Throbbing Gristle, yet it is has been overlooked by reviewers and even many fans. This is odd not only because it is clearly a precursor of some of the wildest industrial music; it also happens to be almost fully formed. In this track we are now definitely in the middle of the dark lands promised by the cover design.

It starts with a thumping beat, sounding at first like treated percussion but soon turning into synthesized rasping, amplified and grossly distorted. The beat is quickly joined by treated keyboards and a bass riff out of The Soft Machine *via* a car crushing machine. The synthesiser which joins in after the first minute sounds out an electronic death rattle. More keyboards, synth and even a guitar wade in, all more or less heavily distorted. Listen closely and you'll hear some aggressive keyboard riffing in the background, another garage punk take on Mike Ratledge, but in a far darker mood.

The symmetry of the lyrics (*"Mamie is blue, daddy is blue too"*) implies something of the ambivalence or indeterminacy of **Rainy Day** - until it occurs to you that Mamie and Daddy might be blue because they are dead, even though that image would jar with everything we know about Faust's outlook (*"we're not at all into the 'death' scene... but rather a band that likes to laugh and enjoy life."* JHP). The music's sense of dread makes it hard to look on the bright side implied by the group's image of themselves as agents of light. The impression is of tremendous psychic pressure, an unholy condensation of the psychological forces of preconscious terror – an impression only partly lightened by the scattered guitar playing toward the

end which seems to offer at least the possibility of a respite. This interpretation was confirmed during the 2005 tour when Jean-Hervé and Zappi played the song live (as **Erdbohrer**) and the expanded lyrics focused on images of concentration camps and the forced sterilization of women. This, more than any other song on the album, perfectly suits the dark and amoral tone implied by the cover.

**Mamie** throbs with suffocating, pneumatic pressure. Bass, drums and keyboards groan as they modulate each other. Turn the track up loud enough and you feel your chest tighten while a guitar and other instruments hack their way through the gloom. While **Mamie** may have inaugurated industrial music, it is hard to say what its own references were - Futurism, possibly, though the music is more introspective than anything in that purely objective tradition. It may be that no one had imagined music this brutal before. Still no one knows why Mamie is blue. It is possible that she's blue only in the sense that the sunshine girl is blue on a rainy day, or Péron was blue when he wrote **It's a Bit of a Pain**. Perhaps there is a clue in the fact that this isn't a portrait of any particular Mamie, since *"Mamie is you too."*

**I've Got My Car and My TV** is as close as Faust ever got to a straightforward rant against comfortable bourgeois life. The TV may be the same one the group would watch on stage during their earliest live performances, and which Zappi would smash to loud applause at concerts for another thirty years. There is some irony in turning the smashing of TV sets into a job for life, entertaining fans of anti-consumerist outrage, but we can let that pass: *"I've got my car and my TV, what should I care about you and your fun."* A fairground organ and the voices of the local butcher and grocer's children somehow manage to keep the right side of inconsequential, but it is a close call. A spiteful reviewer might compare this to some of the songs written by Roger Waters in imitation of Syd in the period just after he left Pink Floyd, before they developed their own overwrought, reactionary take on rock-classicism. I'm being unfair, of course (to Faust, not Roger Waters). The mood picks up and starts to strike a different note toward the end;





*Yesterday noon at the tea time*
*We held three hands close to the other side*
*Suddenly there was a red cloud.*
*A finger come out and said*
*those guys are right.*
*What would you say*
*if this would just happen to you?*

If nothing else the track makes for a respite after the fury of **Mamie is Blue**.

Driven by a racing, circular keyboard motif every bit as crisp as the image summoned up by the title, **Picnic on a Frozen River** is loved for the way it can go on and on without sacrificing the listeners' attention. A work of unhinged genius, there is, once again, something of The Mothers of Invention about it but, curiously, also hints of a jazzed-up, punk Kraftwerk or an electro Scritti Politti. Very few groups have mastered this trick of making obtuse post-rock sound infectiously danceable - I can think of Scritti Politti's "28/8/78", The Red Crayola's "March No.14" (*Soldier Talk*, Radar 1979), Pere Ubu's "On the Surface" (*Dub Housing*, Chrysalis 1978) and Beefheart's "Semi-Multicoloured Caucasian" (*Ice Cream for Crow*, Virgin 1982), and that's about it. The song showcases the techniques Faust were using in the studio at this point, the final tape being edited together from minute fragments by Kurt and Gunter over the course of several days.

The keyboard creates a framework around which are braided two key instrumental arguments. Gunter's sax and Rudolf's guitar take it in turns to paint their angular abstractions over the tune without either of them toppling over into merely wigging out - two studies in muscular but thoughtful rock musicianship of a kind Zappa often managed without ever getting quite this firm a grip on it; Zappa's endless self-consciousness sits between him and the prize, keeping him hypnotised by his own shadow moves while Faust glide past, blown along by their innate sense of play. At 2:40 Rudolf's guitar spirals out into a spluttering deconstruction of itself. To be fair, the guitar tone and line of attack practically scream Zappa, the influence is so blatant. But

Rudolf's playing has charms which more than make up for the debt.

The Doo-Dooettes recorded two versions of **Picnic** for a 7" to accompany their album *Think Space* (Cortical Foundation, 2000.) Gorkys Zygotic Mynci did better, recording a blazing version live in concert for the BBC in 2000.

**Me Lack Space** and **...In the Spirit** are listed as separate tracks but seem to work best treated as a single piece of music - not least of all because the lyrics connect the two songs directly. Things start with another of those shrewd percussive cut-ups inspired by Varèse's sense of sonic architecture and absorbed, presumably, through listening to Zappa's experiments ("Nasal Retentive Calliope Music" or "The Chrome Plated Megaphone of Destiny" offer outrageous examples, from *We're Only In It For the Money*). Unlike Zappa, who can crank out twenty minutes of this stuff in any evening as a homework exercise, Faust, being lazy, tire quickly and shift into a passing imitation of a lounge jazz group, and not even a good one.

Moments later things start looking up. A thundering bass starts to cut its way through, coming out of "White Light, White Heat". But it is a false dawn and soon we're into some raucous





cod New Orleans jazz - again reminiscent of Zappa, this time "America Drinks and Goes Home" from *Absolutely Free* - which ends suddenly with an electronic exclamation mark and the question *"I wonder how long is this gonna last?"* Landing this way in a skewed version of the everyday is presumably meant to remind you that however comfortable the jazz comedown felt the world you are returning to may not be the one you left when you put the album on.

The lyrics to the first part of the song were written using the Surrealist's 'cadavre exquis / exquisite corpse' method, where a text is composed by a group of people each of which writes a phrase on paper, folds it in half and passes it to the next to add their contribution in the same way. The result is a verbal collage, a smear of words;

*Me lack space in the spirit*
*the weekday is five stories high*
*and the deafening different distance*
*between the brown bread breakdown*
*and you*
*is a delicate delight*
*crush cost*
*just imagine your impossible impressions*
*merchant mercy : message*
*from morning to night*
*hey miss brown*
*object to the oak*
*you ought to turn the page*
*take a peculiar pen and write*
*your own instant*
*if somebody talks to you*
*apply for proofs*
*now*
*don't be satisfied with a lack*
*everytime you say goodbye*
*you die a little*
*don't take roots!*
*don't retire!*
*paint the painful page*
*otherwise you only ought to track the outline review*

The vocals here are heavily distorted and broken up. The second part of the saga, **...In the Spirit**, is one of Faust's micro-songs. Its conventional lyrics contain snippets of wisdom on a par with Zelig's advice from his father to collect string: *"Put on your socks before you put on your shoes."*

Foregrounded like this, in extreme close-up, everyday reality balloons up to become esoteric and alien, the things around us emerge in a new light and the spell of their ordinariness is broken. Something similar happens when Pere Ubu's David Thomas celebrates 'the art of walking'. Both groups resist the hippy instinct to sublimate physical pleasure into otherworldly religiosity, projecting strangeness into transcendental realms. At home in this world, they recognise that it is awash with practical mysteries. Being immersed so thoroughly in their own private puddle of dialectical wisdom, it is no wonder that Faust were not tempted by the schemes for instant enlightenment on offer at the time - no Maharishi, joss sticks or Transcendental Meditation for them, they found mystery just by staring intently at everyday life.

*So Far* has strong individual tracks, but as an album it can disappoint when compared to the debut. Despite the consistency of vision between this and the first album, what were thought to be insignificant concessions undermine the effect of the whole. While it is often recommended as a good place to start listening to Faust because its songs can be easily grasped, as well as the fact that it is in many ways more polished than other releases, you can't help but feel that in the rush to create a more commercial sound the group's impact had been slightly blunted. While individual tracks are wild enough, the fact that they are presented in the context of an orthodox album structure means that there is a inevitable sense that the band's vision has been reined in to make something more easily accessible. That doesn't mean that this is anything less than an astounding record by anyone else's standards, but it lacks that final spark, the element of uncompromising, over the edge radicalism that fires Faust's greatest work.



# Tony Conrad: Outside The Dream Syndicate

*They don't even remember working with me... There were probably many reasons for that, including the fact that somebody must have been burning a pot field around where they were working, because there was so, so much pot smoke in the air. It was incredible. And who could remember anything under those conditions.*

***Tony Conrad***

*Caroline 1972*

Tony Conrad had played a crucial role in the history of minimalism long before coming to work with Faust. Born in 1940, he graduated from Harvard with a degree in mathematics before escaping to New York in 1962. There he joined La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela, Angus MacLise and John Cale to form the pioneering experimental group, The Theatre of Eternal Music, *aka* The Dream Syndicate.

The group specialized in combining the power of electrical amplification with keyboards,

hand drums, violin and viola, using precise tunings and drones to allow them to focus on small-scale musical details. Much of the theory behind this approach came from Conrad, who had studied microtonal systems, acoustics, harmonic theory and intonation with violinist Ronald Knudsen.

Conrad's interest in drones began in the log cabin he grew up in Idaho, where the wind would blow across the cracks in the walls to make a sound like sustained flute notes. His version of minimalism emphasises the specifics of noise, interference and distortion, rather than the sugary arpeggiations of Philip Glass and Co., and his lineage reaches down to the heavy metal minimalism of Rhys Chatham and Glenn Branca, to Charlemagne Palestine, No Wave and, at a push, Sonic Youth, rather than the vapidities normally associated with minimalism. Conrad's music is minimalist only regarding its means; the *result* is intended as a maximalist primal roar, the sonic equivalent to staring into the sun. Faust wouldn't have been aware of Conrad before their meeting, but they had already absorbed his influence *via* Cale's contribution to the early Velvet Underground.

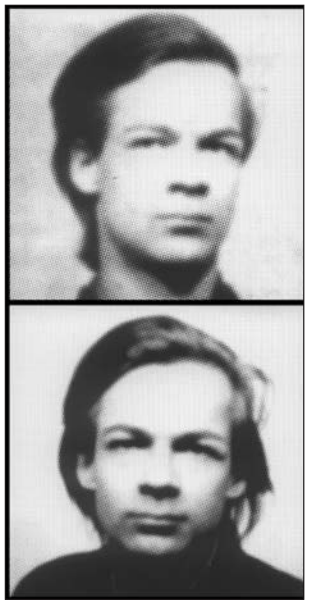
In 1972 Conrad was in Germany engineering a La Monte Young installation at the Munich Olympics and the *Documenta* exhibition in Kassel. He was already known in film circles as the creator of experimental works such as "The Flicker" (1966), "Coming Attractions" (1970), "Straight and Narrow" (1970) and "Four Square" (1971), and after finishing with the installations he spent some time touring the country showing his films. Nettelbeck had already sent word to Conrad in New York, suggesting that, if he ever found himself in Germany, Faust and the Wümme studio could be put to use recording his music. So it was that when Conrad was passing through Hamburg in October to show films he took three days off to visit Wümme and record the sessions released as *Outside the Dream Syndicate*. The nature of his music meant that Conrad wanted to use only a bassist and drummer, so Péron and Diermaier were duly conscripted to help with the recording: *"I told them that they should just keep the beat steady, but when you play like that for a half-hour, it's really unbelievably difficult and painful."*





The initial album release featured just two tracks, one for each side of the album, both built around metronomic rock drumming, a pulsing bass and Conrad's (occasionally overdubbed) violin. **From the Side of Man and Womankind** sticks closely to the template; only the merest of detours and variations in rhythm are entertained as the track unwinds, and the bass clings to one note for most of the piece before finally stretching out into its relatively luxurious two-note riff just before the end.

The music's rhythmic core has the siren persuasiveness of a heartbeat, its implacability heightened by the way that it is attuned to the rhythm implied by the modulating tones, an effect which further emphasises the rhythm's blank, impersonal power. Somewhere inside the beat Conrad's violin wails like a bank of sirens. The effect can be magical in the sense, at least, of creating powerful illusions.



Descriptions of minimalism can make it sound like a cerebral, mildly anaesthetic experience, which is true enough of much of it (though 'cerebral' may be too strong a word), but Conrad's strings build up mind-boggling transformations and patterns of interference that are properly aesthetic in the sense of being physically active. The process of the music feels chaotic too, as the slightest microtonal wobble can send it spiralling off in new directions. There is a similarity to op art in terms of the essential materialism of the approach, where simple relations are used to create the illusion of motion and activity out of all proportion to the means employed.

Arguably Nettelbeck's mix here doesn't help the cause much as the violin is rendered too narrowly to let it create the overtones and patterns of interference on the scale that best serve the music. Other Conrad recordings in this vein, released

as *Early Minimalism* (Table of the Elements, 1996), have more of the sonic bite you might expect from reading the manifestos. Still, despite comments by Conrad to the effect that the album had been cursed by a 'hippy mix', the recording goes a lot further than just proving what Conrad could do in principle. While later releases captured the sound in greater detail, this is the recording that set the benchmark.

**From the Side of the Machine** sets out from the same premises as its sister but was obviously recorded under a different regime. Bass and drums are given more freedom to elaborate, not that this leads them into anything merely loose or decorative. Out of the bare pulse at the beginning Péron and Diermaier develop a stream of subtle motorik rhythms and variations for Conrad to work on. There are contributions too from Sosna, who invited himself onto the session to add 'space synthesiser'. For the most part he provides texture in the form of purrs and roaring; every now and again his synthesisers hit the nail on the head to make a glorious din.

For purists the track represents some kind of compromise with pop music; the title itself makes snootily ironic reference to the music industry. To my ears it sounds more detailed than its doctrinally more pristine, sonically bleaker twin. It is certainly more musically eventful, and of greater interest as a result. There is certainly no reason to believe that the extra detail detracts from Conrad's effect or represents a loss of nerve.

Certainly Conrad recognised a difference in kind between these two versions of his 'eternal music', as you can tell from his account of events at Wümme, which offers a nice flavour of the atmosphere in the Faust studio at the time:

> *There were these people hanging around out there, I didn't know who they were. [laughs] It was these people Faust. And they had been, to some substantial degree, incarcerated in this farmhouse for months, and they had their partners and sexual liaisons and different social complexities enacted on a long-term basis within this farmhouse. It was a microcosm, where everything seemed to have been evolving in some strange way over the course of months and months. It was no wonder that*





> *they really didn't really have a lot of involvement with me, and I thought of them as musicians that I could use in my record. But Uwe said that they wanted to do stuff too, so we did one that was my style, and one that was more like a rock 'n' roll style. That's how there's two sides.*

**From the Side of Man and Womankind** sees Conrad try to capture his music using the members of Faust as a backing band, **From the Side of the Machine**, on the other hand, is Faust's own version of 'the eternal music'.

Nettelbeck arranged with Virgin for the album to be released through their subsidiary, Caroline. Due to a dispute with La Monte Young, who takes a strictly proprietorial attitude to everything produced by the collective in the early years, no recordings of the Theatre of Eternal Music made it in front of the public until recently. *Outside the Dream Syndicate* was the first version of this music to be made available, the first time we got to peer into the inner workings of the Dream Syndicate, which makes it a landmark release in the history of this strand of minimalism. The choice of label was brave too as it meant the record was targeted at a popular, rather than classical or art audience. Both options were considered but it was Conrad's decision to aim for a popular audience, based on the Fluxus conviction that the distinction between high art and popular culture was redundant and fading anyway. This judgement, as we now know, turned out to be a little previous.

The cover showed a blown up black and white photo-booth shot of Conrad, with titles and credits in grey daubed crudely onto the image. It has a punk-primitive feel appropriate to the music. At the same time its amorphous look and the predominance of grey lets it drop into the slipstream of Faust album designs, making it look almost like a regular Faust release, or at least the close relative it undoubtedly is. Unfortunately the record convinced neither the music press nor the public. The few reviews that appeared slated the music, buyers stayed away and the record soon disappeared from circulation.

Despite dismal sales, *Outside the Dream Syndicate* came to be regarded as a groundbreaking release, one of the

foundation stones of power-minimalism. Not only that but, not being widely heard, it soon acquired a reputation as a fiercely uncompromising work of avant-garde brinksmanship. Subsequent re-releases have done much to mute that reputation, revealing the music in a more nuanced and sympathetic light. Having seemingly vanished into history, the record resurfaced for the first time when it was released on CD in 1992 by Table of the Elements. Ten years later the same label released a 30th Anniversary edition which included more material from the sessions, an additional, longer mix of **From the Side of Man and Womankind**, and vastly expanded sleeve notes.

Of the new tracks, **The Pyre of Angus Was in Kathmandu** sees the rules relaxed enough for Péron's bass to start to wander aimlessly in places, though it falls back into a rapid pulse as the drums drop out just before the sudden, possibly premature ending. Meanwhile Conrad's violin slashes and scrapes to work up a more aggressive sheen than elsewhere. It seems as though Péron and Diermaier were given a free hand again, making this one of the genuinely collaborative recordings, though there is no sign of Sosna.

The 'Angus' of the title is Angus MacLise, not only a member of the Dream Syndicate but, along with Cale, a member of the proto-Velvet Underground. It is said that he left the Velvets in protest when they took their first paid concert, complaining that the money would give the promoter the right to tell them when to stop playing - an imposition too far. He went on to make a number of interesting shamanic-noise-ritual recordings, some of which were subsequently released on *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* (Siltbreeze, 1999) and *Astral Collapse* (Quakebasket, 2003). His work at this point was concerned with ideas of ritual, irrationalism, freedom and improvisation, ideas he drew from the Beats and which have since become widespread. Angus did indeed die in Kathmandu, in 1979, where he was cremated according to the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

The next track, **The Death of the Composer was in 1962**, is another of the more balanced collaborations from the sessions





- adulterated and compromised, from a different point of view. It practically swings along under the power of the drums and, especially, Péron's increasingly funky bass. The track wanders so far off Conrad's normal trajectory that Brent Sirota, in his review at Pitchfork Media, went so far as to say that *"Conrad abandons the impassive drone of the first disc for an almost celebratory psych-rock."* In fact neither Conrad nor his collaborators abandon anything here, it is just that this time, once again, Faust aren't subordinated to the dot and comma of Conrad's program but are given room for manoeuvre.

The remixed **From the Side of Man and Womankind** dilutes the already rather slight violin by removing one of its overdubs. The track's main attraction lies in the few minutes of interplay between bass and feedback at the end, edited out of the original mix. It rumbles and clicks along in a way that suggests a different reading of the minimalist brief, the emphasis moved away from sonic power onto more subtle modulations of simple tones and noises.

While the additional tracks tell us nothing fundamentally new about the sessions, the release of the anniversary package at least offered the chance to reappraise the work and its place in history. On 17th Feb 1995, Faust and Conrad reconvened for a concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank, the line-up consisting of Conrad, Péron and Diermaier as *per* the original sessions, augmented by Jim O'Rourke and, reputedly, Conrad's wife Alex on Cello (though she isn't mentioned in the notes that accompanied the subsequent release.)

Conrad recalls the intensity of the concert:

> *When we played at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, Jean was playing with great fervour. I said, "Let's play for 50 minutes." The set broke down and we stopped early, and he came back and he was very excited, and he showed how his fingers were bleeding. He was ready to play more - the flesh was actually stripped off his fingers, (laughs) it was a nightmare, I couldn't believe it was happening.*

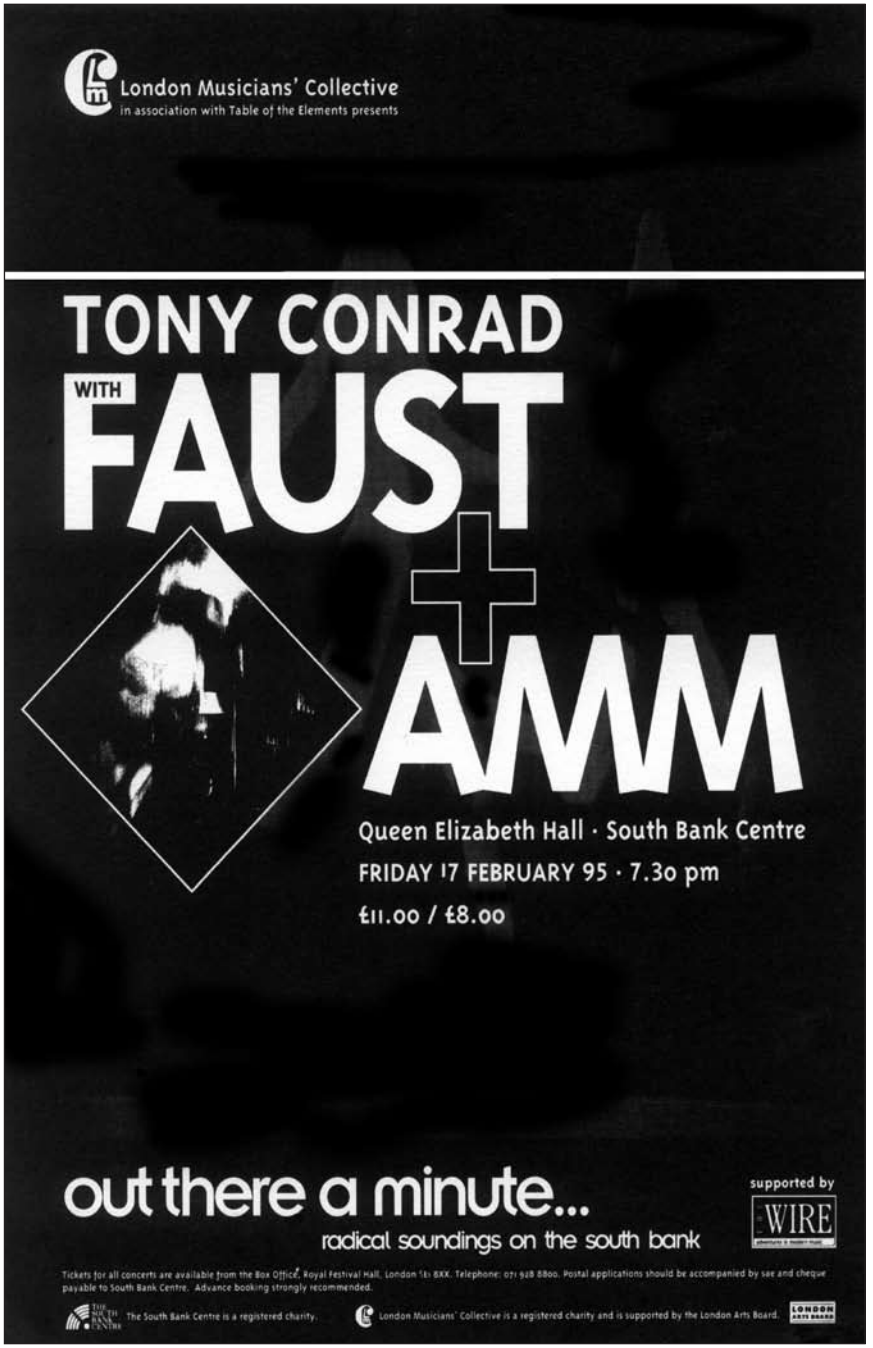
Péron tells the same story, offering a finer grained account of the tension on stage:

> *The Queen Elizabeth Hall gig was quite something… Zappi and I (and Tony?) agreed that I would stop the piece (someone had to stop it you know or else we'd just all dehydrate on stage as no one would dare stop it first) and the sign was me hitting a cobble stone with a sledge… and that was my main concern during the whole show even when I lost my plectrum in the first five minutes and realised I did not think of a spare one... even when I broke the E-string on my bass... even when I saw blood dripping at my feet... the idea of this small square hard granite stone and this small hard steel head and me being as the vector of a perfect trajectory ending with a clean impact and hundreds of people watching this..... Tony, what if I miss? WHAT IF I MISS? This obsessive idea helped me through the whole show. The violins and the celli were burning their high pitch ferociously equalized tones in my brain, Zappi was sweating his wild dog-sweat and the stone just lay there, waiting patiently for its fortune. That's why I was so excited, at the end... because it stopped, because I did not miss.*

The recording of the concert, *Outside The Dream Syndicate: Alive* (Table of the Elements, 2005) makes quite a contrast to the studio collaboration. The effect is certainly more vivid. Squealing and distorted, this release finally brings the sound into line with its punk reputation, and this is surely how most of us had imagined Conrad should sound all along.

The concert begins with strings wailing and it seems a good while before the drums jump in, sounding almost comically hollow in this configuration, an impotent thud pitted uselessly against the white lightning of Conrad and O'Rourke's violins. The rhythm doesn't manage to convince until the bass wades in to pin it down, allowing the group to cohere.

From that point on, though, it is relentless. Listening to it really is a little like facing into a storm - and there is the problem. Faust's recordings twist and turn, weave about and confound you. Faust's music is argumentative, spiky, and often obviously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**AMM**

*QEH, South Bank Centre, London, 17th February 1995*

AMM on stage 7.45 pm
Interval c.9.05 pm
Tony Conrad + Faust on stage 9.35 pm

**TONY CONRAD:** *photo by ZV Vasovic*

the product of different voices. Conrad's music, on the other hand, is monolithic by definition, pointing at the listener like a weapon.

Conrad's approach clearly engages the musicians as they can choose to take a detached and almost meditative attitude to the discipline required to play this strictly regimented music, much as Péron describes. Being in a passive, non-negotiable relation to the music, there is less scope for the listeners to play the same game. Their lot is one of having to surrender to the barrage directed at them, and any pleasure they receive has a masochistic sheen.

Once you realise you have been pinned down like this, the margin of freedom you *are* granted can seem more tenuous than ever. The waves of interference created by Conrad's microtonal harmonic jostling can start to seem like a smokescreen and alibi for the rigidity that frames the experience. The music counters the danger inherent in its premises only by resorting to 'one louder' self-aggrandisement, cancelling out its colour and turning it into that type of noisiness that is really silence at high volume. Conrad's music too often sits uneasily on this fault line, perched in an awkward balance between free noise and oppressive power.

In concert, the monolithic aspect of the approach was underscored twice. The stage lighting was used to project a huge shadow of Conrad playing his violin onto a screen behind the musicians, looming claustrophobically over the event. And the choice of AMM as support made for a striking contrast, the subtlety of their gossamer improvisations colliding with the stolidity of Conrad's noise.

The problem is that Conrad's sound can easily collapse to become unequivocal, a sonic jackboot stamping on your face – this is Merzbow's corny trick, as he embodies this *reductio* of minimalism as a brand. Unless a balance is kept between the heat of the playing and the light of the sound, the music becomes hectoring and authoritarian; the tactful relationship between the music and its audience is broken.

This threat seems latent in most minimalism, musical and otherwise, where the usual ideas of structure have been

abolished. Everything becomes surface, and there is little room for striking up a negotiated relationship with the work. All that is on offer is agreement. One way or another, all strands of minimalism share this in-your-face attitude (despite a seeming lightness of touch in most cases) that threatens to simply hijack the listener's subjectivity to pre-empt their spontaneous response. The structure of the music is simple, immediate and non-negotiable. You can submerge yourself in it or you can get out of the way. This authoritarianism is the payload of Steve Reich's comment that *"one can control everything just as long as one is prepared to accept everything."*

However you judge the success of the collaboration with Conrad, it left its mark on Faust's music, on tracks like **It's a Rainy Day** and **Krautrock**. As it is not clear whether the Conrad sessions took place before or after **Rainy Day** was recorded it could be that, as suggested earlier, the influence had already been absorbed *via* Cale and The Velvets. All the same, it is clear that on tracks like these Faust take advantage of similar techniques, sharing a similar attitude to noise and repetition; running the same danger but somehow avoiding the traps that Conrad sometimes collapsed into.

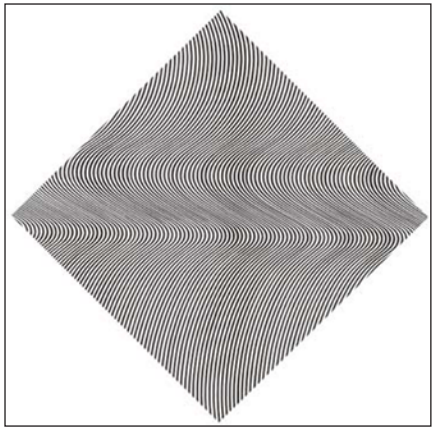


# The Faust Tapes

*Why don't you make a mistake and do something right?*
***Sun Ra***

*Virgin 1973*

Polydor had great hopes for Faust, making substantial investments in the hope of turning them into a progressive rock supergroup. Nettelbeck convinced them that Faust could cross over to a large audience. Some find it inconceivable that anyone who had heard Faust could imagine them as a mainstream group, but that is only hindsight speaking; who really knows what could have been achieved in the right circumstances with a little bit of luck? Certainly Faust could have connected with a larger audience. But by now Polydor had lost faith and were unwilling to take the experiment further.



After the first two albums failed to live up to Nettelbeck's promises (or come anywhere near them) the game was up. The group were unwilling to make more concessions about the direction of the music, which Polydor still thought needed reining in. So the

label did some calculations about their investment and its rate of return. Although the second album sold a respectable 20,000 copies (according to Irmler - others are less optimistic), it wasn't anything like enough to recoup costs. From a purely financial point of view the conclusion was obvious, and Polydor began to pull the plug. Graupner disappeared and financial support was slowly withdrawn. The group were even reduced to living on dog food for a while in an attempt to keep things going. Despite these sacrifices the Wümme studio gradually had to be abandoned, in the course of which it was stripped by the band of any useable equipment. Faust were now without either studio or label.

One asset they kept hold of, along with the hardware, was a collection of tapes made during the recording of the first two albums and immediately after. These would trickle out to the public through Virgin and Recommended over the next decade. Negotiations with the new Virgin label went well after the group played a private concert for Virgin MD Richard Branson and A&R man Simon Draper. Branson himself grasped Faust as a purely commercial proposition, but Draper and others seemed keen to get behind them and support their ambition. For Faust, Virgin must have seemed a natural bolt-hole, linked as the label was with thoughtful progressive rock and all things adventurous. The band were also keen to come to England, where they felt they had most support for their music - it is one of the ironies of their story that they failed to achieve the slightest recognition at home, where they remain a footnote in the history of German music. Perhaps if Virgin did the job properly Faust might break through to the audience they deserved.

No one seemed to notice that, considered as a whole, the Virgin crew were instinctively conservative despite their loons, long hair and hip sales pitch. Either that or, more likely, the group noticed but kept quiet, lacking any alternative. Virgin's ambition was to build a business empire on the foundations of a commercially under-exploited British freak-scene. To do this they had to steer carefully in the marketplace, attaching themselves to promising bands at the margins but always turning them toward the sun of the market. Any attempt at real progress,





anything too out of the ordinary, was likely to be sabotaged in the long run by Branson's steely instinct for the bottom line, which could always outreach and outvote Draper's apparently genuine concern for the music. Adept at counter-cultural sleight of hand, Virgin had little real awareness of, or regard for, the substance of what they sold. Their forte lay in marketing fluffy yet ponderous novelties like Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*, not some spiky new poetry of sound. Henry Cow faced similar problems trying to slot into Virgin's world. They too finally discovered that the relationship couldn't be made to work.

Someone had the ingenious idea of breaking Faust to a British audience by selling the next album for the price of a single, 48p. If only hordes of students and hippies had a chance to hear them, they were bound to be converted. Like a schoolyard dealer, Virgin would first get the kids hooked, only later reeling them in. According to Julian Cope it was Virgin's idea; according to Jochen Irmler, the group made it a condition of their contract with Virgin that the first album with the label be sold this way. They were determined to connect with their audience. Irmler claims that the plan was to ensure that the album would *"enter the charts at once."*

A lot of marketing mileage was wrung from stories about the label losing money on every copy of *The Faust Tapes* sold; Virgin claimed that it had to be withdrawn because the demand was breaking them at the bank. But this was a shrewd deal for all concerned and it seems unlikely that Virgin lost the money they claimed. The tapes were simply leased from Nettelbeck (*"We already had what would become* The Faust Tapes *in our luggage*", HJI); there were no recording costs as Polydor had effectively already paid them. The packaging was cheap and most of the promotion came for free, due to press interest in the idea of getting an album for the price of a single. At the same time Virgin racked up credibility points for their association with Faust. The record was, in Cope's words, *"the social phenomenon of 1973",* and everybody was happy for a while.

The cover was (again, according to Cope) *"a glorious Warholian pre-punk mess*" - pre-punk, obviously, but with

the home-brew flavour of punk messthetics. The front was taken up by Bridget Riley's painting 'Crest', a diamond shaped window onto a world of geometric standing waves. Riley's art, built from optical illusions (hence 'op art'), developed out of the pop art of the '60s, and for that reason has been associated with Warhol, but Riley has quite distinct interests. While her work tends to be more canny than originally provocative, it runs deeper than anything by Warhol, the pope of surfaces. Even in its abstraction Riley's work steers close to nature and the body because it addresses itself to them, producing its effect only in an interaction with the viewer's nervous system; the first major exhibition of op art, held in New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1965, was called, appropriately, "The Responsive Eye".

Riley's monochrome image of interfering waves also works nicely alongside earlier Faust designs, leaning as it does on the binary play of black and white, presence and absence. You might hope that Faust would take Riley's idea to another level and lend it an unusual treatment, tuning it more closely to their own purposes, but this was a budget release and the design was simply recreated as-is on a cheap cardboard cover. The back of the sleeve was taken up by a set of cut-and-pasted excerpts from reviews and commentary about the band.

As for the record itself, its reputation paints it as an amalgam of harsh noise and aleatoric weirdness, a sprawling chaos built from extreme cut-ups and tape manipulation. This assessment seems to fall over of its own accord on playing the record today. It is true that there's a lower song-to-strange ratio than on the first album, but the music sounds nothing like the onslaught of difficult, random music that is typically described in reviews.

This perception emerged because the record was undeniably strange for its time, and correspondingly difficult to absorb. As a result it began life with a reputation for being extraordinary. This verdict lingered down the years and even started to sediment out as a simple fact. Partly this was because many music journalists barely listen to records at all. Unfortunately for them their job isn't to analyse music but to brand it in terms of the market so as to make sure that it is being sold through the right channels.





They are also encouraged to mystify the music to make it seem all the more valuable to the consumer. Even when a journalist tries to listen to music they will often find it easier to repeat what they have been told they will hear, forcing the music into categories it is supposed to belong to anyway; just like the rest of us, journalists often hear only what they expect.

Over the years the legend of *The Faust Tapes'* impenetrability grew because of this inertia. Reviewers found it easier to repeat that the album was a gold standard of weird rather than getting to grips with it as something poised concretely between past and future. More careful attention might have eroded the myth down the years.

It seems immediately obvious that, while the album represents a break with *So Far*, it is in many ways similar to the debut, which also relied heavily on tape splicing to edit together textures, small scale compositions, songs and glimpses of songs. This time less effort has been made to weave the pieces together into coherent assemblages; the raw elements are more often left to stand on their own. Maybe that is because the album was put together even more quickly than the first, but it may also reflect the group's growing confidence in their vision. But however it came about, the myth of the album's impenetrability is overdone and needs undermining. The first thing to be said in that regard is that, if nothing else, here you can find a few of Faust's best songs tucked in among what are already accepted as being some of their bravest musical gestures.

Having said that the album is nothing to be scared of, it is worth bending the stick back immediately in the opposite direction to register how difficult it must have seemed in context, when it was first released. We should take into account that at this distance it might be easier to hear consonances and continuities which escaped listeners at the time, as the music inevitably sounds less challenging now than it did when it was first made. Along with other groups working to similar effect, the result of Faust's influence is that they have helped attune the listener's ear to cope more easily with what before seemed like noise. But their influence makes it harder in retrospect to

appreciate the impact their music had at the time; their success makes it more difficult to appreciate their achievement in launching themselves into new spaces - because they ended up taking us with them.

In accordance with the avant garde's own law of diminishing returns, the shock used to jolt the listener from a passive relationship to music undercuts itself by raising the stakes needed to achieve a similar result in future; once the impact is absorbed, it isn't going to be as easy to achieve the same response tomorrow. So now the bar has been moved and we are harder to shock. To that extent there is some truth in the albums' fearsome reputation, and the journalists didn't get it entirely wrong.

If we don't register the tricks that time plays on the ear we can lose sight of the scale of music's radicalism. The music must be measured against history even as it fights to escape it. Otherwise, the danger is that we go too far in re-normalising the music. The review of *The Faust Tapes* at The Prog Archives site goes way too far in this direction, awarding it 'three stars out of five' and describing it as 'good, but not essential'. Even worse, the ludicrous Mark Prendergast, in his book *The Ambient Century*, says that the album "is well worth the effort for its ability to amble along ambiently in the background", proving my point about journalists not even bothering to listen. Whatever else the album is, even at this distance it isn't something you can refuse to take sides over, whether you think it is a masterpiece of avant garde synthesis or a hodgepodge of freaked-out sonic nail clippings.

While the original album release consisted of only two anonymous slabs of music, the version included with *The Wümme Years* box added track markings and a detailed track listing provided by Chris Cutler - basically a list of the different tape sections that make up the record with the titles of a few actual songs and proto-songs thrown in. In the notes that follow I use Cutler's listing and titles.

Due to its low price and some great press coverage *The Faust Tapes* sold 50,000 copies when it appeared (though I have also heard figures of up to 100,000) and had quite an impact,





galvanising opinion. As it is one of the most adventurous records ever released into a mass market, you could argue that it has done more than any record since The Beatles' "Revolution #9" to help drive the techniques of the avant-garde out of hibernation in the academy into the hands of the public, where they can make a difference. This is the Faust release other musicians most often cite as an influence, even a life changing experience.

*The Faust Tapes* was intended as a holding operation, whetting audience appetites until the group had time to record new material. It took advantage of clever promotion to build Faust's audience and turned out to be a landmark release. At the time it was seen by some as confirmation of Faust's greatness - perhaps they hadn't heard the first album. According to Martin Walker, writing in The Guardian: *"Faust have been simmering just below the surface of brilliance for two albums now... I suggest they have now clambered their way above it."*

For a long time the record worked as rock's litmus test for sorting the haves from the have-nots. Cope reports Jim Kerr, singer with pomp-rock stadium poseurs Simple Minds, boasting of how he dispatched his copy of *The Faust Tapes* from the top of a tenement block. The story sticks in the mind of most who have heard it. I like to think of the image reversed - Jim Kerr jettisoning himself into a life sucking the tits of mammon as his copy of *The Faust Tapes* sailed off into the future.

Canny marketing meant that some bought the record just because of the price tag and press furore but sold it on after a quick listen had scared them off. Prior to Recommended Records' program of reissues this recycling kept one of the group's most important releases in the public eye - the eyes, at least, of those of us who haunt the world's second hand record stores.

The album opens with hands working a piano over sustained drones (**Exercise #1**) and a bout of fierce cyclical drumming (**Exercise #2**) before we get into **Flashback Caruso**. One minute in and the idea of *The Faust Tapes* as dense and homogeneous tape collage is out of the window. **Flashback Caruso** could sit happily as a track on *So Far* or *Faust IV* and no one would notice. More than that, it would have made a fine

single release. Its understated elegance makes it a classic of stoned psychedelic well-being;

*When you leave your place and*
*walk in someone others garden,*
*suddenly you see*
*it's a warming colour in your mind to be.*

*It's only a garden made of sandwich,*
*marshmallows jumping 'round and smiling quiet.*
*Inside a scone of cream there is a language.*
*Bring our minds together, press them tight.*

*The rainbow bridge sounds flashbacks of Caruso.*
*Beyond eleven dreams are dancing lights.*
*For everything you feel there is a do so,*
*your mind, it is accepted, you are right.*

There's a familiar, wobbling ambivalence to Rudolf's lyrics. The words might have been passed through some semantic distortion box, garbling the referents and meaning, but the idea manages to come through. Its poetry reflects the indeterminacy and over-determination of the unconscious. A gentle guitar and piano carry the song, turning it into a hazier Canterbury rock. A few minutes in and a fuzz toned guitar starts playing for lyrical effect, oozing its own 'warming colours' over the scene.

The lyrics invite you to cross the border of your personality into *"someone others garden"*. There you'll find sweet and plastic marshmallows *"jumpin' round and smilin' quiet"* in some parma-violet, love-heart technicolour heaven, as gorgeous as the cherry phosphate in Beefheart's "Orange Claw Hammer" (*Trout Mask Replica*, 1969). Their sugar in each of these treats presumably stands for the pleasure repressed by worthier diets.

The song then conjures up Hendrix at Rainbow Bridge, perhaps, tying him back to the opera singer Caruso, then forward to the dancing lights that decorate the climax of the dream. Go there and you'll discover *"Your mind, it is accepted. You are right."* As part of nature you are already everywhere, as in absolute idealism: *Tat tvam asi* - 'that [the world] is you' - as it





says in the Upanishads. Whatever the song ultimately means, is there anyone who couldn't instantly sense its warmth?

Apart from a spurt of bubbling analogue synth half way in, **Flashback Caruso** is instrumentally sparse, but what Faust achieve with it would be hard for anyone else other than Syd Barrett. Barrett's adaptation of Joyce's poem "Golden Hair" is maybe the equal of **Flashback Caruso** even though it inevitably shares the air of impending disaster that attaches itself to his solo records. Despite lyrics leaning on the side of the cod-surreal, the song carries the day because it is relayed with utter conviction. Heir to the likes of "Für Elise", **Flashback Caruso** is an example of that rarest of species, German soul music.

Years later the Frankfurt group S/T - one of the last great psychedelic groups - would play **Flashback Caruso** live, turning it into a fine mesh of leaking feedback and space echo, heightening its dreamlike quality further - the only time I have heard a Faust cover version as fine as the original. The symmetry between their performance and the original recalls its lyrics: *"bring our minds together, press them tight"*. This convergence was ratified when Péron's Faust played a similar version on their 2005 UK tour. **Flashback** was also covered by The Sommerville Players, SF Seals and The Groceries, all of whom delivered straight readings of this airily gorgeous song.

Recording at Wümme went on day and night, with every permutation of the group involved. Irmler, Wüsthoff and Sosna spent their time splicing and mixing the results when they weren't themselves playing. The result was hours of recordings, much of which ended up forgotten, although Jochen still has some of the reels in his studio today - extracts from which eventually found a home on the album *Patchwork*. The 'Exercises' and 'Untitled' sections of *The Faust Tapes* are made of such offcuts quilted roughly back together. Following **Flashback Caruso** is **Exercise #3**, a mix of a few shards of the chaos captured by Wümme's overworked tape machines, a minute and a half of echoed groaning and shrieking with trilling keyboard and brass woven in.

**J'ai Mal Aux Dents** then winds its way in. The song is built on a churning guitar riff working as a *perpetuum mobile* that drives the song on. Cope called it 'the most defining Krautrock riff of all'. There's something of **It's a Rainy Day's** bruitisme at work here, as it is another primitive romp. Lump-fisted synthesiser stabs punctuate the bars, while underneath you hear some of Diermaier's most tightly controlled playing, punching the drums rather than slapping them. Gunter trails a wandering sax, less effective than usual.

The refrain expresses the chronically world weary *"J'ai mal aux dents, j'ai mal aux pieds aussi"* (I've a toothache and my feet hurt too). The phrase is repeated along with the riff until the two merge. There is no verse-chorus structure to speak of: the song is shaped instead around the way its central riff evolves. Things move relentlessly, building until the energy becomes overwhelming and the song explodes into cacophonic free-rock, releasing its power in an orgasmic burst. After only a few seconds of this release it is time to start again; the riff returns at the drop of a hat and we are dropped back into the middle of the song's careering. The song hurtles on again until the order to "Rock off!" precipitates another burst of chaos.





Tuvan singers will sometimes perform while riding horses, their voice becoming directly physical as it is harnessed to the animal's pounding. The singing in **J'ai Mal Aux Dents** unconsciously echoes this in the way that it merges so completely with the rhythmic energy of the music. The words of the chorus are bound directly to the central riff. Other words and phrases are sung to match the rhythm or for similar, purely musical effect. Such as they are, the lyrics sound angry. They could be a routine beatnik dig at Mr Suit, though it is hard to be sure;

*This is a hard working mans' song*
*There is... no old dream*
*We practised for years my friends,*
*to get these machine screams.*

*This time maybe we do it without crime.*
*Because you are crying and I don't listen.*
*Because you are dying and I just whistle,*
*that thing so anonymously today.*
*And echoes of my laughter burn into your seven hour turn.*

At one of the first reunion concerts in the '90s the group were approached by someone asking them to play the song 'Schempal Buddha'. No one had any idea of what was meant until the fan volunteered to sing the lyrics: "schempal Buddha, ship on a better sea" ("J'ai mal aux dents, j'ai mal aux pieds aussi"). Being as plausible as the original, these new lyrics have been used in some subsequent concerts and live recordings. Cope renders the lyric as "Chet-vah Buddha. Cherr-loopiz." Such user interpolation and guesswork may be one of the benefits of releasing records without lyrics or track titles. Certainly it is hard not to smile at the contrast between the tooth-aching grind of the original lyric and the fan's image of the serene Buddha adrift at sea.

In 1995 self-styled 'post-tonal dronedelic psych-pop noiseniks' Ectogram recorded a version of **J'ai Mal Aux Dents** (calling it **"**The Faust Tapes" - this was before Recommended's track listing was published), stretching the song's locomotive framework into sixteen minutes of kosmische hooliganism, spraying it top to toe in phased guitars, feedback and electronica. After hearing it, Faust brought them in as support on their 1996 UK tour.

Ectogram are one of a few bands capable of combining Faustian levels of psychedelic light with punk energy while retaining their own poetry - but they have fierce competition, as S/T created a version for their album of Faust covers, V.ST (Save Our Sperms, 2006), using a similar approach but turning everything up higher still.

Announcements follow, then the sound of footsteps, taped conversations, dial tones, bleeping and a speaking clock - a one minute *audio vérité* document of a day in the life of a hi-tech space commune (**Untitled #1.**) Meifert and Diermaier then jump in to play thundering drumming pyrotechnics, and a pointillist bass punches out its notes as if prodding you in the chest. The chorus brings in trilling, industrial electronics. This is perhaps a draft of a song later abandoned (**Untitled #2**). From here on there is a block of ten minutes of the sort of rapid tape editing that gave the record its reputation. Less effort has been made than before to integrate the parts, and there are plenty of rapid-fire jumps between fragments, sometimes in mid-flow, so that you sometimes have a row of beads rather than a braided pattern.

The familiar elements are all present and correct. There are proto-songs like the two halves of **Dr Schwitters**, which feature Diermaier battering away as keyboards trill and gargle on top, spiralling like Chris Carter's synthesisers on Throbbing Gristle's "AB/7A". There are several percussion experiments - some by Arnulf (**Untitled #5, #6**), others uncredited (**Untitled #14**) - that offer effective examples of Faust's studio manipulations.

Sosna makes striking individual contributions, with fragments like **Untitled #8** marrying sharp playing with extreme treatments and sound effects. After a thunder storm half way through, his guitar gains confidence, then everything stalls before the track exits. He also has some of the purest, most abstract electronic pieces to his credit, maybe relying on help from Irmler. **Untitled #9** combines bass synths and cymbals to create a sickly undulation that brings Throbbing Gristle to mind again, this time "Hamburger Lady". **Untitled #11** is a slice of bleeping and clicking electronica that sounds inconsequentially pretty in





the same way that To Rococo Rot sound pretty. Cluster would have thinned the sound further, but here Sosna wades in with some bass electronic moaning before the track lurches forward and accelerates just seconds before the end.

Other standout sections include **Untitled #4** - fifty seconds of pitch bending oscillators, thumping toms and cranky, mechanically driven keyboards. Some fragments sound like overheard improvisations; **Exercise #4** blends bass tones with a wandering piano and seems to have ambitions to finally become a wall of noise, but fades after only a minute.

A minute of fairly ordinary rock ends the long-running collage, then three songs line up to see the album off. First is Sosna's **Stretch Out Time**:

*Yes I see,*
*You are the one to be me.*
*Now I see,*
*You are the one to be me.*

*Stretch out time, dive into my mind and sign*
*Get answer and hold your dime*
. . .
*Love is really so true*

It sounds like the beginnings of a great Faust song, a couple of rounds of verse and chorus, but it lasts just a minute and a half before stopping dead. As on **Flashback Caruso**, a lyrical meeting of minds takes place. There is some nice staccato guitar playing from Sosna where he does his trick of playing up from the bottom of the music, muscling his way in on it from below and threatening to overturn everything. Like the drafts you get on a Beatles studio bootleg, this feels like an early version of a song you know well, awaiting only some finishing touches.

The next two songs are Péron's. **Der Baum** is another work in progress. It swings along nicely with what sounds like Péron himself on guitar, with his characteristically cranked style, but it misses having a hook. The lyrics feel odd for reasons you can't put your finger on at first;

*He opened the door, turned on*
*the light and it*
*hurt my eyes*
*taking the kids to bed*
*they're crying so loud they're breaking my head*
*see her lying on the grass*
*must be a nice feeling for her ass*
*the wind has come*
*so the leaves, they are gone*
*feeling like a tree today*
*and it's a nice feeling*

Then it dawns on you what the problem is: the song comes across as cantankerous - not a mood designed to suit Faust. It just sounds like someone whining that, one after another, people are 'breaking his head'; if only they could be left alone to go on thinking about the woman's ass. A second run at this song might have seen a useful rethink.

Péron redeems himself immediately with the last track, the gorgeous **Chère Chambre** (*aka* **Viel Obst** – 'lots of fruit'). The song could easily have made it onto *So Far* or *Faust IV*, consisting as it does of threads of acoustic guitar woven into a sound like a less troubled Nick Drake, though there is also some of his melancholy in the air. Two rounds of wordy lyrics are spoken soft but fast, the first part in French, the second in German;

*His body hot, his hopes distorted*
*and with charm he masturbated like nobody could do it,*
*each movement was one more step towards her.*
*A fistful of water absorbing cotton is a hat on Kerstin's head.*
*I suddenly felt that the shock was more than likely,*
*I was not surprised, I was not afraid.*

*Chère Chambre,*
*you looked at me a long time when I was naked on the bed,*
*when I remained silent for a long time.*
*You must know me by now.*
*I saw the world through your three eyes,*
*I have lived in your bosom.*
*All my empty white moments, nights with eyes open.*



VIRGIN

PRESS RELEASE

FAUST

In early 1971, when other companies were releasing (with considerable success) records by German rock bands such as Amon Duul, Polydor International were neglecting the field in favour of middle-of-the-autobahn music in the James Last vein. Finally, recognising this lamentable (and unexploited) situation, an executive of the aforementioned company asked Uwe Nettlebeck, a respected writer and film maker, to put together a band to play 'significant' music. The musicians Nettlebeck contacted now constitute Faust, and they are:-

Werner Diermaier (drums and vocals)
Jean-Herve Peron (bass guitar and vocals)
Rodolf Sosna (guitar and vocals)
Gunther Wusthoff (synthesiser and saxes)
Hans-Joachim Irmier (organ and keyboards)

This method of forming a group will doubtless remind those of us who are less well versed in the Teutonic approach to rock of the Don Kirshner, Jonathan King type bubble gum factories. Germans, however, do not require group members to live together in a country retreat for half their lives before daring to look at a recording studio. The music is comparatively rootless, the product of a modern industrial urban society, and when a group is put together in Germany, by a person of Nettlebeck's integrity, with musicians of Faust's calibre, specifically to explore new areas of the medium, the attitudes of those involved ensure a valid approach and end-result.

In February 1971, Polydor gave the band some old recording equipment and they cloistered themselves in a converted schoolhouse at Wunne, near Hamburg, to record and record and record. The same year saw the release of the first Faust album, followed in 1972 by "So Far", both of which received much critical acclaim and sold well.

With 1973 came the arrival of what the band call their 'sound generators'. These are black perspex boxes covered with dozens of white buttons; no-one but Faust seem to know exactly how they work - they were custom-made, took two years to build and are unique. The sound generators are in part responsible for the highly individual sound of Faust - after all they are the only group in the world which have them. With these generators and other new equipment, Faust could now produce on stage effects that previously could only be achieved by lengthy adjustments to the PA inputs.

The group toured France earlier this year, and followed it with a tour of England; they have received incredibly enthusiastic receptions in both countries. The tour of England coincided with the release of their first record on the Virgin label, "Faust Tapes", which sold at 48p. and leapt into the Charts. It remained in the Top 20 for eight weeks before being deleted.

# VIRGIN

PRESS RELEASE

The album received only the highest praise from rock critics in all areas.

Martin Walker of the Guardian, in an article on European rock bands, says:-

"Faust have been simmering just below the surface of brilliance for two albums now, ..... I suggest they have now clambered their way above it."

Marion Fudger of Spare Rib says:-

"The success of their experiments is due to their individual talent and their flexible but organised structure."

Faust stayed at the Manor Studios to record their next album, "FAUST FOUR", whose release date, 21st September, is also the first date of their new British tour. They have spent the summer in Germany preparing new material inspired by the homelands.



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# FAUST

As tangled and dense as the rarest of modern jazz, but with a force and urgency that is pure rock. Not the rock of juke boxes and glossy suits but the rock of the punks, the poor whites of angry alleys and vicious sounds"

*Martin Walker "The Guardian*

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Henry Cow provide music that defies labelling (although it refers to numerous styles in passing) and not only demands attention in its own right but also opens up a new sense of potentialities of music in the listener"

*"Let It Rock"*

AT . . .

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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| 6th | " | Newcastle City Hall |
| 8th | " | Sheffield City Hall |
| 9th | " | Bristol Colston Hall |

Further dates to be announced

**Henry Cow's album is out now**
**Faust IV released September 21st**

*On thoughts without end*
*and which by turning over lose direction.*
*All of my moods and my desires,*
*my solitary failure.*

Péron's guitar occasionally sounds rough but he has the knack of finding attractive guitar figures that float along, allowing the rest of the group to do their thing against the framework he provides. This time he is flying almost solo and carries it off nicely, as he would later on tracks such as **Cendre**.

The words tell the story of what could be a day out shopping with Rudolf followed by Péron's reflections about the trip, himself and his room. I imagine the shopping trip and room are based in Wümme. What better way could there be to end this, the last of the awesome Wümme albums, than by recalling the 'thoughts without end' that occurred there?

Less focused than the debut, *The Faust Tapes* is still completely compelling. There are grounds for thinking that this was Sosna's project, his tribute to Zappa; certainly he did much of the editing and mixing. While he borrows his inspiration from *Uncle Meat* and *Lumpy Gravy*, in line with his character, Sosna takes their techniques to another level - wilder and more extreme than the originals. The abrupt editing of the material adds to the impact by letting the elements of Faust's music stand out more sharply than ever before, heightening the music's spikey, disruptive force. As with the first album, technical and formal shortcomings end up working in the album's favour. That it is finally not quite as strong as the debut hardly matters: this is the Faust record that has shaken listeners and made them think again about what is possible.



# Faust IV

*We did everything from jazz to imitating church choirs. We dissected and examined everything, just like children at play. We looked very closely at the combination of sounds... There's a reason that a fire engine makes that sound, it was chosen deliberately. All these things carry meaning.*

**Jochen Irmler**

*Virgin 1974*

Of Faust's early releases, history has this one marked down as the runt. The idea is that Faust had finally been neutered by Nettelbeck's commercial instinct, that he was desperate for the group to make their breakthrough, forced them to write pop songs and mixed the album with Graupner to make sure that they sounded more like pop songs. There may be something in this. It is true that Nettelbeck for the first time got to decide what went on the record, a privilege he seized for himself, much to the band's annoyance. But if his intervention was planned to produce

a commercial breakthrough, it failed, both in substance and in effect. Few people at the time bought the record and it turned out to be Faust's last for Virgin. The zeitgeist decided that they had shot their bolt.

It may be that the sound lacks something of the depth and range of earlier releases, seeming perhaps thinner. This impression was heightened by Virgin's dismal early attempts at transferring it to CD (though this has been rectified on the most recent release). The difference in the sound could be down to the band having to work in Virgin's Manor Studios in Oxfordshire, away from their old Wümme base - though they still had the services of Kurt Graupner, who was recalled for duty during the recordings, his presence being a condition Nettelbeck insisted on in the contract with Virgin.

The cover lacks the immediacy of earlier releases too. According to Irmler, the idea for the sleeve was Wüsthoff's: *"It was supposed to be a symbol of the music on this record, which, like 'classical', should be written down in little dots, but as our music wasn't classified as belonging to this genre we thought it might be better to have an empty sheet of music on the cover - as an example of an absurdity."* The absurdity is the fact that this thoroughly modern music is overlooked by current ideas of what counts as accomplishment, dismissed as entertainment music.

The design was in the same general tradition in terms of the fundamental ideas it communicated. Its blank staves make familiar points about indeterminacy and music as 'the sound of yourself listening', but it feels half-hearted, even allowing for the fact that Virgin spent less on its production than Polydor did on the first two albums. And anyway, **The Faust Tapes** design had chutzpah to spare despite the low budget.

First impressions are made worse by the fact that Virgin's production department didn't even bother to get the track listing





right - **Giggy Smile** is listed separately and in the wrong place while **Run** isn't mentioned at all. Words are misspelled, or spelled differently on the cover and the label. The track timings are all over the place. If the record company doesn't care enough about the record to get it right, who could blame people for thinking that it wasn't an important record?

Despite this, listening to *Faust IV* today it is hard to see how anyone could ever have thought the music any less compelling than before. Just as *Faust* and *The Faust Tapes* form a pair, *Faust IV* is the natural successor to *So Far*, inheriting its strengths along with its weaknesses. Judged against one another there is little to choose between the two: **No Harm** is matched by the epic **Krautrock**; both albums have diamantine versions of **Picnic on a Frozen River**; **It's a Bit of a Pain** parallels **I've Got My Car and My TV** for tone; **Jennifer** stands up against **Mamie is Blue** for sheer sonic invention (despite being very different in mood), and so on. You could perhaps argue that it is less groundbreaking than the earlier album for the obvious reason that *So Far* had already set the band's standard, but even that is debatable. Like *So Far* it tries to offer a commercially compelling version of Faust's sound rather than the full onslaught of some of the other recordings. There is also an argument that this album rounds off and perfects its cousin. But however you look at it, this is an exciting work of rare magic and exact science.

Musically *Faust IV* sits happily alongside other Faust releases. If it didn't shift the units Virgin hoped, that may be down to their failure to get behind its promotion and marketing. More likely it was due to the shifting attention of the audience. Released a few years later it might have found a wider audience as a result of the punk aristocracy's regard for rock's eccentric fringe - Mark E Smith and Johnny Rotten between them enthused about Can, Faust and Krautrock, Magma, Beefheart and Henry Cow, for example. On its release, however, *Faust IV* disappeared straight into history. Since then its reputation has recovered a little thanks to Cope's efforts and the release of a much expanded

reissue. Its complete rehabilitation requires only that it be widely heard.

While Faust had the use of Virgin's Manor House studio for most of the day, the hours between three and five in the morning were given over to a young Mike Oldfield to record *Tubular Bells*. Somehow building and occupants together managed to survive the collision of matter and anti-matter implied by Faust and Oldfield meeting in the same time and place. The money made from Oldfield's album launched the Virgin label into the big time, laying the basis for the record company, airline, financial services, mobile telephony and soft drink brands we know today, making Branson a happy man.

The track that named a genre, **Krautrock** starts abruptly with a burst that introduces pulsing synthesisers draped with layers of distorted guitar, tremolo cranked up high. Jochen explains how the title came about: *"After we'd been living some time in England, we became aware that the English still feared the 'krauts', since the war wasn't that long ago... And it may be that when hearing our music some people might have thought that the next air raid on London was just around the corner."*

Péron recalls the song's recording:

> *"**Krautrock** was recorded at the Manor Studio, an improvised session to start with, only a theme with one, at most two, instruments. We found the 'theme' interesting and decided to work on it again during the day...*
>
> *Here is my analysis of the piece: 0 to 0'51" the theme is launched, turns solid. Now from there to 9'30" the theme will be savagely attacked, twisted, ignored, decorated, overdecorated, stripped, left alone etc. Around 6'00" the tambourine plays syncopations and... prepares for the long-awaited introduction of the drums at 7'00". I sometimes think of intercourse with an extremly long 'prelude'. Anyway, the beat takes it to a climax about 2'30" long. At 9'30" there is definitely a change of mood, the energies start dropping, the post coital sadness begins, sister eternity opens her arms... a last jerk, a final tremor at 11'30" and you may close your eyes, listen to your breath and let your beloved one fall asleep, snuggled in your arms."*

While not exactly "Do the Standing Still" the track is another of Faust's sound sculptures and it is static in the sense that potential movement is paralysed by currents of energy pulling in different directions. Based on a live studio recording, there is still plenty of evidence of further processing and treatment. This is another recording the group would revisit; a monumental blur of music, the sonic equivalent of a Jackson Pollock canvas, it deserves revisiting.

The drums hold their fire until over half way through before starting. Even then they flutter about the pulse of the song rather than propelling it. Play this quietly enough and you might even wonder what the point is; play it loud and you'll hear fields of energy shifting and mutating. An eleven minute visit to the theatre of eternal music, you feel the influence of Tony Conrad even if Faust interpret the brief in a very different way.

In mundane reality the song fades out as blocks of sound spin around the stereo space, throwing off sparks as they rub against each other. There is a brief reprisal of the drums before the track starts to fade and then disappears altogether in terms of the spiral scratch that ties it to the vinyl. In another world of pure form the end of **Krautrock** points back to its beginning, its churning waters leading around again, by a *commodius vicus* of recirculation, to the opening roar. **Krautrock** squats there, turning but otherwise motionless, like some vast sonic mandala.

A critic once wrote that the track was a parody of a pointless Krautrock jam or King Crimson pomp rock. In fact it is a strip torn from a huge sonic canvas. What seems indeterminate from a distance opens up at close range to reveal a world of flickering detail, like one of Brion Gysin's giant desert canvases. One of the most dense of Faust's '70s recordings, it prefigures the Surrealist sound of the post-Péron Faust led by Irmler after 1996.

Truman's Water recorded a cover of **Krautrock** for their 1993 album *Spasm, Smash xxxoxox Ox and Ass* (Homestead Records, 1993), feeling like a sincere tribute to the original but adding nothing in particular.

An oddity among Faust's recordings **The Sad Skinhead** sounds sparse, especially after **Krautrock** - just drums, bass and





a guitar, no tape trickery and only the occasional electronic rasp to ruffle the pristine instrumentation. As a novelty record it could be compared to Pink Floyd's "Bike". Péron later said he wanted to write a song about 'absolutely nothing', in which case he failed. What you get instead is a skronkily played reggae song about the love between two skinheads. The words typify how Faust so often create ambivalence from a simple, childish lyrical symmetry;

*Apart from all the bad times you gave me,*
*I always felt good with you.*
*Apart from all the good times you gave me,*
*I always felt bad with you.*

Someone ought to have released this as a single. It might have going down well at a time when skinheads and hippies were fighting one of youth culture's occasional tribal wars. But there's more to the song than a long-haired parody of a dim skinhead foe. The chorus sneers, but it captures the boredom that lies behind skinhead violence;

*Going places, smashing faces,*
*What else could we do?*
*Going places, smashing faces,*
*What else could have happened to us?*

The last line gets as a response the only non-traditional instrumentation in the song, a derisive synthesiser fart - a bohemian's tribute to his lumpen proletarian enemy. You can easily imagine the lyrics sung without irony just three years later by a suburban punk band, which is more or less what happens in Slaughter and The Dogs' "Where Have All the Bootboys Gone?". Faust's version, written from the other side of the fence, manages to be knowing yet still sympathetic. As an ex-skinhead I appreciate the effort. At least **The Sad Skinhead** gave a few hippies something to laugh about, though I obviously rate it higher than that.

2006 saw an expanded re-release of *Faust IV* which fixed some of the problems with the original transfer, corrected the track listing and added comments from Jochen Irmler. Not only that, but a bonus CD added Faust's Peel Session as well

as new versions of a number of the original tracks, including an unremarkable alternate version of **The Sad Skinhead**. K Leimer and John Holt recorded their own version of the track in 1975, while Truman's Water covered it on *Spasm, Smash xxxoxox Ox and Ass* along with their version of **Krautrock**, just mentioned, again creating a straightforward tribute. French composer Pascal Comelade made it something of a speciality, recording four versions to date - on his albums *Haikus de Pianos* (Eva, 1991), *Danse et Chants de Syldavie* (Les Disques Soleil, 1994) and *L'Argot du Bruit* (VIR, 1998), as well as an excerpt included in his medley "Résumé du Concert du Bel Canto Orchestra", where it helps prop up versions of "Honky Tonk Women", "Stand By Me" and "Egyptian Reggae". His attempts at the song are playful, in the spirit of Satie, helped considerably by the fact that he uses a toy orchestra. The versions from 1994 and 1998 feature Péron on vocals and guitar. For their album of Faust covers, *V.S/T* (Save Our Sperms, 2006), S/T turned the song into an electro-punk onslaught that brings to mind Metal Urbain, with a vocal call and response barked from alternate channels.

After the intensity of **Krautrock** and the squeaky **The Sad Skinhead** comes one of the most elegant folk(ish) songs ever recorded, up with Ewan MacColl's "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" or Fred Neil's "Dolphins". **Jennifer** was written in the studio by Sosna in honour of a girl who drifted into the Manor House one day during sessions for the album. It has something of the static quality of **Krautrock**, but this time the sound is floating and weightless rather than solidly monolithic. An echoing, pneumatic bass spreads waves of pressure through the room as Donovanesque lyrics are half-sung, half spoken, and a guitar picks out the shape of the phrase that keeps this slip of gauze in the air. A little way in, a roll of tom-toms introduces the drums, which this time take a back seat to lend only muffled support. When piano and brass join in for the chorus the feeling is of a slow intake of breath before you are released back into the sunshine of the verse;

*Jennifer, your red hair's burning,*
*Yellow jokes come out of your mind.*





Thin sheets of electronic noise are released into the song, like sighs or rare clouds of energy drifting up to the stratosphere. The pressure slowly rises, and the sound coagulates before erupting into bursts of energy and shrieking. This time the release is not orgasmic, like the breaks in **J'ai Mal Au Dents**, but ecstatic. To lead you out of the song there is a long, mutant piano-roll section which covers things while the mayhem shifts and settles. The ending brings you safely down into the real world (and the end of side one if you are listening to the vinyl.) If you are like me, you might even be a little breathless by this point.

The instruments are straightforward, but the treatment of the bass and the use of electronics turns this into something modern and abstract. When people talk about experimental music, if they mean anything at all, it is that the outcome of a performance is unknown at the start, and some sort of gamble is involved. In fact it is often just that some groping in the dark took place before arriving at conclusions, which anyway may be only half-baked. **Jennifer**, by way of contrast, is controlled and cocksure - not at all experimental in that sense. What Faust learned at Wümme, they invested to create this new sound. This is electronic pop music of a high order, both abstract and coherent, sculpting a unique sound-world but presenting it convincingly as a kind of popular music, or popular music in waiting. It would be another twenty years before anyone else

would make records to compare in terms of sheer precision - The Aphex Twin, perhaps. The expanded re-release of the album carried an earlier version of **Jennifer** which pushed the guitars further to the foreground, relied less on the bass pulse of the original and lacked the glorious racket at the end of the originally released version.

In 1996 Michael Morley's Gate recorded a version of **Jennifer** for their album *Monolake*, cranking it up into a speaker-rattling wall of sound. Morley played with Faust on their 1994 tour of America (and consequently on **Rien**). Although they didn't play **Jennifer** on the tour, judging by this version Morley got the point anyway. S/T's version, again from their album *V.S/T*, also steers close to the sense of the original. Florida-based Q-Burns Abstract Message (*aka* DJ Michael Donaldson), on the other hand, recorded a version for his album *Feng Shui* (Astralwerks, 1998) which, for reasons probably to do with his use of sequencing software, ironed out the life of the song and worked its corpse instead like clockwork.

**Just a Second (Starts Like That**) starts like... the sound of a sudden razor edit. The song leaps at you from the speakers just as **Krautrock** did at the start of the other side. It is structured like something from the debut, merging distinct recordings into a single piece without trying too hard to hide the seams. Funky guitar and an unusually slippery bass keep company for a minute until the tempo is slowed by twittering synthesisers and an electronic pulse that comes blowing its way through the music. The electronic effects start to take over until all that is left is a pulse garlanded with abstract gasps, trills and bleeps and a distorted guitar. At around two minutes a piano joins the mix. The track builds convincingly but then suddenly decides to wrap its hand in, leaving us with the sound of a horn heard over the horizon. A truly abstract studio construction built from already abstract parts.

At least that is how it seemed at the time. The 2006 reissue of *Faust IV* included a vastly extended version of the track, stretched over ten minutes, which ditched the wilder abstractions of the first release to reveal the underlying recording on which





it was based, an extended jam that carries itself along on the strength of a rather workmanlike rock structure. We get to hear almost eight minutes before this version too collapses into the same electronic interjections, feedback and studio overdubs. The original take is hardly groundbreaking, but comparing it to the released version shows again how far Faust went in the studio, reworking recordings to create the released 'product', which anyway still resembled snapshots of an evolving process rather than stable, finished things.

According to my copy of the album, the next track is **Picnic on a Frozen River (Deuxième Tableaux)**, except that it isn't - not at first. Instead we find Sosna's **Giggy Smile** starting in with its four note bass loop and a gently strummed, phased guitar intro. It then launches into a punchy, rock-steady groove which it holds tightly for a minute;

*Please me baby tease me and I'll love your giggy smile*
*Lots of naked Germans 'round but there's no use to cryin'*

*Better touch me before you go down*

*Ease me baby feed me baby, naked lunch is fun*
*I'm so lazy, I'm so crazy in the rising sun*

Passing the only test that matters, this song flies along, grabbing your attention from the off. The keyboard picks out its staircase theme, running up and down like an Escher figure. Diermaier's drums sound as lazy, loose and powerful as any since Ringo's, while the rest of the band keeps swaying forward like the tide coming in. This must have been electrifying to play.

At two minutes there's a temporary step back, with piano, bass and a few carefully plucked guitar notes creating a little breathing space. Soon everything picks up and starts gathering momentum all over again, but at higher intensity. Rudolf's guitar bursts up from the ground, as so often, and a saxophone chips in, winding its way around the tune. Here is where I came in, since this is the original of the first Faust track I ever heard - the instrumental version released by Recommended as **Party #1**.

From there on the pace is sustained. The song even hits a plateau for a while. Just before the four minute mark there is

a flash of guitar - just a few well placed notes but they bring things to a another peak. Immediately a loping bass butts in, joined seconds later by a mud-soaked garage riff that runs for a few bars before breaking up into splintered guitar lines. Then it starts, *that* keyboard riff, the hypnogogic whirl of **Picnic on a Frozen River**. The tail-end of **Giggy Smile** plugs directly into the new song. There's no sax this time; two guitars circle each other instead, acting out a knife fight, as slick and agile as you can imagine, playing the same sort of dancing abstractions as the original.

This version is a minute longer too, meaning that you get that little bit more time before putting it back on again. Another thing: **Giggy Smile** and **Picnic** are complete in their own right, yet Faust weld them together seamlessly here. The elements of Faust's music are like the shards in a kaleidoscope, always capable of recombination and reconfiguration, and the boundaries between song, version, remake and remix are permeable.

I remember playing this loud on my car stereo driving through Dorset at the height of summer in the early '90s, passing through the countryside as it slopes down to the sea, drenched in sunlight, on my way to meet with an old girlfriend, thinking it perfect.

The version of **Giggy Smile** on the expanded CD release extracted it from its surroundings to leave the original recording. In doing so it managed to restore a minute of funky bass lyricism removed from the original, presumably to make the edit from **Giggy** to **Picnic** all the more tight.

The track **Psalter** is imaginatively named **Lauft... Heisst Das es Lauft Oder es Kommt Bald... Lauft** on this release. Péron explains;

> *Kurt and Uwe … could address the studio through a horrible mono speaker which sounded to me like... mmmm... not human. So there I was, probably alone in the studio and going through the usual ritual of not knowing whether we were recording or if they were still checking... So Kurt would say 'lauft!' ('running') but most of the time they would stop*

> *for some (in my smoked head) obscure reason. So this time I wanted to make sure it was no kidding and really running. So I asked 'do you mean it's running or it will soon be running?', and Kurt answers 'running!'*

A folk guitar, marimba, drums and, of course, psalter work together to create a lopsided, screw-threaded contraption of a song. It might almost be electronica, the guitar's arpeggios joined by what sounds like sequenced keyboard. The strange time signature (13/8) gives it the jerky, hypnotic feel we know from songs like **Picnic on a Frozen River**, though not as intensely. A Heath-Robinson machine going through its paces, the track winds its way gently on. Heard from a different angle it could almost be in the jazz-folk vein of Davey Graham or Bert Jansch. As for the lyrics;

> *I felt I was not scared any more of losing either my teeth or my time. So I said so in my mother tongue: 'Je n'ai plus peur de perdre mon temps, je n'ai plus peur de perdre mes dents'. Later on, Peter Blegvad explained that you can't loose, win or kill time and, just in case you'd somehow manage to do it, it would not be a crime anyway.*

It is not often you can say this about a piece of music, but the best part here is the clapping. It is easy to imagine the group gathered around a microphone, stoned, trying to follow the quirky rhythm and laughing at each mistake. The song ends with a mechanical clattering that is actually the most literal possible interpretation of Zappa's xenochrony: two metronomes set to different timings. Admittedly Ligeti had already easily trumped them with his "Poème Symphonique" of 1962, which featured 100 metronomes. A solo guitar and Irmler's organ cover the fade with the same feel that ends **Abamae**. Here Faust are helping invent electronic - as opposed to electric - folk music (or, according to a Guardian reviewer, "psilocybin pastoralism"), and a thread is being spun that leads, *via* Eyeless in Gaza, to some of the music of the recent folk revival, though Faust's version of this fusion still sounds tighter and more convincing. Again, Faust carelessly throw down the seeds of an entire genre of popular music. If there is no actual line of influence from Faust to electronic folk, the coincidence is even more remarkable.

At first you might think the record is ending as everything now turns to silence. But the needle doesn't just drop into the lock groove as you expect. You might start to wonder if the group are having a little joke and the silence you are hearing represents the blank staves from the album's cover. Slowly you start to make out Irmler playing a restrained and statuesque harmonium / keyboard drone, **Run**. Spare and relaxed, it has something suspiciously devotional about it at first, but still it doesn't come on like a heavenly choir. It sounds literally awesome.

Half way in a dirty synthesiser tone starts to intrude, distorted and grinding. It sets out from the same premise as the original keyboard but becomes increasingly frantic, rising in volume until it dominates, the conflict between the pure tones of the 'natural' sound of the first keyboard and the distorted overlay reminds you of the continuities and differences between natural and human worlds. The synthetic rasping scours on your brainpan until it suddenly stops dead, its rapid transit only emphasising the tranquillity of what follows as the original droning keys are left to





play out the last minute quietly, and you come down gently with it.

This aspect of Faust, almost certainly the work of Jochen Irmler, can be hard to discuss. In theory it shouldn't work, and it is hard to slot into the wider picture of Faust's stance, but it is a recurring strand in their music and I find myself making excuses for it. At the very least, with its stately organ sound and heavy reverb it hovers close to becoming clichéd in the new age style of Popol Vuh. The music has nothing of the bleeding edges or hallucinatory power you expect from Faust, but sets out to tap into something fundamental. The music tries to conjure up nature directly, as a romantic composer would. In 1980 I was living at the top of Portland, an island which juts almost vertically from the sea in the English Channel. On foggy nights the lighthouse at the tip of the island sounded its warning horn. When the horn stopped, its reverberations would go on spreading, trapped in the fog, fading out tantalisingly in the dark. **Run** has the same manner of suggesting huge spaces and tremendous power.

An attitude to nature reflects the most basic orientation toward the world. Awed submission is often just a stop away from abandoning reason in its favour, worshipping blood and soil, perhaps, but in any case collapsing into irrationality – not the politicised anti-reason of the Dadaists, but a full blown irrationalism that tries to set itself up on territory somehow prior to culture. Part of a generation of post-romantics made this submission in the last century, ending up supporting myths of race and nation and, through that, fascism. Because of this it is necessary to point out that you can be in awe of a nature not strictly apart from you. This impulse is just as alert to nature, but sees it as something not separated from mankind but as a reflection of it, an image of human potential.

This siren call shouldn't end at all, but when it does it leaves the same lingering reverberations I heard in Portland, suggesting something grander and more inclusive than our everyday selves - the natural world we are part of.

Recorded at Wümme, **It's a Bit of a Pain** is another Faust essay in symmetry, contradiction and ambivalence. The folksy lyrics and melody, courtesy of Péron, want to come to terms some nameless misery by getting ready to move on:

*It's a bit of a pain to be where I am,*
*but it's alright now.*

The rest of the group tell a different story. The jarring synthesiser tone injected over the 'alright now' sounds like literal pain, not the merely metaphorical 'bit of a pain' of the lyric. Whining like a high-pitched dental drill, it gives the lie precisely to the idea that things are alright now.

The guitar break tears its way up from the unconscious with a snarl. Not just argumentative, it is as deranged as the playing in the Velvet's "I Heard Her Call My Name", on which it might even be based. It is also a fine example of Sosna's jagged and articulate playing, cast in the pissy and cerebral mould of garage punk rather than the lyricism of the blues. By the end of the track his guitar is howling.

In the middle of the agonising a woman can be heard reading a German translation of Germaine Greer's "The Female Eunuch", in what is supposedly an act of solidarity with the women's movement (it is hard to know how seriously we should take Jochen's later explanation that the group supported the movement - but felt that it had *"gone too far"*).

This nice piece of 21st Century grunge pop-art makes for a fine song. Polydor thought enough of it to release it, backed with **So Far,** as Faust's only single for the label before it ended up here at Virgin, grafted onto *Faust IV*.

As an LP which, according to reviewers and journalists at least, is supposed to disappoint, *Faust IV* is a surprise. It carries a raft of confident songs and a mine of invention, and works as a summary of Faust's music. The expressionist outrage and ambition of *Faust*, the Velvet's-inspired propulsion and drone of *So Far* and the rapid fire montages of *The Faust Tapes* are all here. *Faust IV* proves that the group were still way ahead of the competition. I'd say it was mature if there were not a





danger of summoning the wrong image. It certainly represents a popular summary of what Faust had achieved up to that point, as opposed to the sense of maturity as a grown-up, messy and repressive compromise with the world.

Despite having lost Wümme, which had been crucial to the development of their sound and their fundamental approach to studio composition, Faust still somehow managed to translate what they'd discovered there into the alien situation at the Manor House. Perhaps the new technical and personal challenges even contributed a little to their success by creating new problems to solve (*"Wümme was ostensibly made out of crap but it was very well put together crap and worked perfectly for us whereas The Manor didn't at all. It was designed for rock bands"* - HJI).

Like *So Far*, the album lacks some of the impact of *Clear/ Faust* and *The Faust Tapes*. Despite incorporating elements from those albums, the totality of *Faust IV* inevitably comes off as more considered and rounded. Though by no means easy listening it is still obviously a more commercially focused record, and compromises have been made; but if you bracket that reservation it is hard to avoid the conclusion that it is an extraordinary record on its own terms.

If every song on The Beatles' *Revolver* had been as sonically adventurous and yet coherent as "Tomorrow Never Knows" it would be more like this record. With only a few exceptions, the tracks on *Faust IV* create their own universe, sounding confident and accomplished even when they are sonically utterly unique. In a sense this is the album where Faust delivered on their promise: no longer merely shocking, they now set out to astound. Polydor had planned on getting an electronic Beatles. It turns out they had got just that. The irony is that they had let them go.

# Munich

The situation with Virgin rapidly fell apart. Relocation to England provided plenty of opportunities for living a rock and roll lifestyle, and the band dived in without a thought. Somewhere there exists Super-8 film of Faust hanging out with the Rolling Stones in the studio, high on coke and champagne, possibly at a launch party for *Tubular Bells*. Generally, as in so many things, Faust went too far. Perhaps this was in protest at the wine made available to them at The Manor, which the band judged undrinkable. Scandals occurred which seem designed deliberately to alienate Virgin. They ran up bills for drink, parties and whatever took their fancy, passing them off casually onto Branson.

The direct cost to Branson wasn't the real issue. At stake was something more fundamental than money. Faust's disregard for the real-politik of dealing with everyday hierarchy was only a symptom of their lack of concern for business and, indeed, everyday life as generally understood: the routine of kowtowing, looking plausible and playing the game. It is the kind of attitude Branson recognised instinctively as the opposite of his own hypocritical world-view, and it was never going to harmonise with the hippy-entrepreneurial spirit of his company. Branson, sensing this, was bound to spew them out.

Nettelbeck too began to lose interest during the recording of *Faust IV*. He felt the group weren't working hard enough - turning up at the studio only briefly each day, and for only one or two days at a time during the week, making it hard to get





anything done. One day shortly after the album was finished, quite out of the blue he jumped ship to return home, taking Kurt with him. He even tried to hand over his interest in the group to Branson. According to Nettelbeck, Branson had no interest in taking them on: he *"dropped Faust at once, because, dull as he was, he had that kind of specific instinct you need to become rich. He knew for dead sure he couldn't handle Zappi & Co., not for a day. Doomed to go down their road, as all fine artists are, to regions unknown to Branson & Co.; childish as they were, as all fine artists somehow in a way have to be too, dedicated to a world of their own, they were above his profane reach."*

Before it came to that, Branson had already been trying to shape the music, telling the group how it should sound if it was to be successful. Irmler decided that he'd had enough: *"If you try to create music out of your personality like Faust did and then some **** comes along who cannot even tell Bach from The Nice, that's no working basis. Under the circumstances I didn't want to participate any longer. We had a fight over this issue and in the end I left England."* Faust had been abandoned by Nettelbeck and Graupner and they'd been kicked out of yet another studio. Now Irmler bailed too, in protest at Branson's interference and the way the album had been tracked and assembled by Nettelbeck and Graupner without the full involvement of the group. Rudolf soon followed.

There was a tour around this time with substitute members – Peter Blegvad from Slapp Happy filling in for Sosna on guitar, and Uli Trepte of Guru Guru playing a radio and a rack of effects which together he christened his 'Space Box'. At some point during the tour Diermaier telephoned Irmler and Sosna to persuade them to return, which they did, but by the time the tour ended the game was up. One after another the group skulked back to their homes in Germany, Austria and elsewhere. There they licked their wounds - but not for long.

Irmler had the idea of reconvening at Giorgio Moroder's Musicland studios at Arabella House in Munich, where the Rolling Stones had recorded. If they could share their coke and champagne then they could use the same studios. Even if they

had no communication with Virgin or good will in reserve, they still had a contract. The plan was to book themselves into the studio and hotel, produce a new album, and sort out the matter of the bill with Virgin when circumstances allowed. What could go wrong?

After a week of recording and living high on the hog courtesy of room service, the hotel, who also owned the studio, could no longer be put off with excuses. They demanded payment amounting to around 30,000 DM. When the group contacted Virgin, the label made it clear they weren't interested in releasing another Faust album and refused to pay or help out in any way. Graupner, who had rejoined them for this new adventure, now slipped away for the last time. The group grabbed the tapes and equipment and loaded them into Péron's van. Wüsthoff and Ruud Bosmer, friend and roadie to the band, smashed through the hotel gates in a dramatic escape, but to no avail. Sosna, Péron and Irmler were arrested and thrown in the local jail, and were released only when their mothers settled the bills. As Péron later remarked, the pathetic circumstances of their escape lent a distinctly unglamorous conclusion to the affair.

The Munich tapes stayed with the band until Recommended Records released them in 1979 as part of *71 Minutes of Faust*, as well as on subsequent Recommended collections (*Return of a Legend: Munic and Elsewhere* and *The Last LP*). At least that used to be the story. In 2004 a Virgin demo tape from 1975 appeared which looked like a rough draft of an unreleased Faust album, *Faust V* (or *Faust 5$^{1/2}$*, as Irmler says it was to have been called), based on the Munich recordings. Given the way Faust and Virgin had parted it seems unlikely that Branson would have gone forward with another release. Péron and Diermaier say they know nothing of the tape, but it is possible that Irmler prepared it in a last ditch attempt to resuscitate Virgin's interest.

In 2003 London's Resonance Radio presented a major overview of the band's history, during which a good deal of unreleased material received its first public airing. A limited edition 4 CD box set of this material, *Abzu*, was made available to the members of the Faust mailing list. As well as interviews with





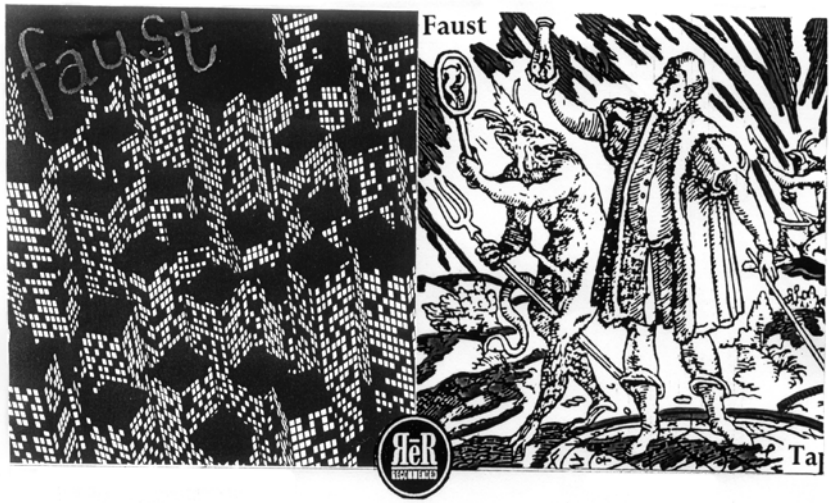
Chris Cutler and Jochen Irmler and music from the reformed Faust there were a number of (mostly rather short) tracks and excerpts from the Wümme years, and one track, **Wonderworld**, recorded at Munich and otherwise unreleased.

The Recommended compilations, *Abzu* and *Faust V* all contain material recorded before and after Munich. As there is considerable overlap between these releases I won't discuss them separately. Instead I'll look at the tracks recorded in Munich, then, in the next chapter, at the rest of the material in roughly the order in which it was recorded, going right back to the demo they made to win the original deal with Polydor.

The opening of **Munic Yesterday** (*aka* **Willie the Pimp**, **Munic A**) could be a separate recording, a keyboard and chiming guitar sounding out a dark and sonorous dirge like a buzzsaw Black Sabbath. At only about a minute it is over, and there's a second of silence before a sudden cut takes us into the tune's pulsing, synthetic bass heart.

Although Sosna and Péron had been listening to Zappa's *Hot Rats* (Bizarre, 1969) there are no references to the original "Willie the Pimp" in the Faust track other than Rudolf's repeated mantra / homage *"Willie the pimp"*, morphing into *"It's really the point", "keep out of the point"*, and so on. The main point of the Zappa original is its swamp-boogie guitar eulogy to the blues, but its street-wise lyricism is entirely missing from this effort.

Instead, **Munic Yesterday** is stubbornly prosaic, verging on, or at least aspiring to, becoming a motorik Krautrock epic. Its synthesised pulse provides the only sign of commentary, gradually increasing the scope of its querying final note. The lyrics could just well have been based on The Soft Machine's "We Did it Again", as that's where the rhythm is borrowed from. This is a new Faust - not entirely new, as it has something of **Krautrock**'s scope and ambition, but the first Munich recording aims to be an industrial powerhouse, its central pulse lit up by a series of sparkling synthetic trills, the humming of electricity pylons, boiling electronica and, eventually, Rudolf's guitar, which comes in fizzing and cackling dementedly.




**FAUST -** *:THE FAUST TAPES RERF2CD :71 MINUTES OF RERF1CD*

*Inventors of "Kraut Rock", iconoclasts extraordinaire, FAUST are key figures in 20th Century music. In the early 70's, along with CAN and KRAFTWERK, they re-invented pop music as a specifically European art-form. Virtually imprisoned by Polydor in their own studio for two years, they were able to revolutionise the whole process of musical production; they improvised with Industrial noise, generated bizarre hypnotic grooves, indulged in shockingly wilful studio-based collages, and dabbled with every conceivable musical genre, sometimes simultaneously! Every now and then they found time for a burst of satirical pop, or occasional waves of delicate ambience.*

*Amongst those FAUST have strongly influenced we must count Brian Eno, Joy Division, Cabaret Voltaire, Test Department, Neubauten, My Bloody Valentine, Julian Cope and a host of Industrial and Techno bands. The music has lost none of it's immediacy or relevance - it sounds as if it was recorded last week, not last decade.*

*"The FAUST TAPES" explores the concept of the studio as a compositional tool, using all manner of quick-fire cuts and cross-fades; " 71 MINUTES OF", comprising the LP's "Munich and Elsewhere" and "The Last LP", reflects the larger hypnotic structures of the group's live performances. These out-takes, improvisations and second thoughts were recorded after the group had left Polydor and Virgin, and have never before been widely available.*

*FAUST have begun to perform again after a break of fifteen years. Recent gigs in London and Hamburg have only bolstered the legend.*

*"A radical mix of Musique Conrete, Stockhausen, the Velvet Underground, and moments of almost pastoral beauty." NME*
*"FAUST were first!" TIME OUT*
*"Anyone who's loved the last half-decade's re-invention of the guitar, (Sonic Youth, My Bloody Valentine et al.), will instantly recognise Faust as a prime ancestor of 'our' music." MELODY MAKER*
*"the greatest thing ever.... a source of INTENSE inspiration." JULIAN COPE*

*ReR RECOMMENDED 74 TULSE HILL LONDON SW2 2PT UK. TEL:081 671 5215*

*Recommended / ReR Press Release 1996*

# Faust

## Breaking all the rules..

A lot of mystery has surrounded the band Faust, like 'Who were they?', 'What happened to them?', 'Are they really all driving taxis?'. But seriously, the mystique that surrounded the band was totally intentional, calculated for maximum impact, their music and the presentation of the albums caught the public awareness almost instantly without any concerts or hyped publicity.

Faust (German for "fist") were the brainchild of journalist Uwe Nettelbeck, who was approached by a Polydor A&R man with the idea of doing something new, unlike anything in the Anglo-Saxon rock scene. To boldly go where no band has gone before!

With a large advance from Polydor they converted a small school hall outside Wumme (between Hamburg and Bremen) into a well equipped studio. Along with the help of engineer Kurt Graupner the 6 specially recruited "musicians" began to play, record, isolate themselves from the world and develop a sound that was uniquely their own.

After 6 months or so Faust made their debut live performance in Autumn 1971 at the Hamburg Musikhalle. Reaction to this concert were very mixed, the music press gave Faust the critical thumbs down whilst audience reaction was one of startled curiosity or bewilderment.

It may not be surprising then that when Faust's debut album appeared in Germany in late 1971 that it too was slagged off by the press. Initially sales were very poor, reputedly well below the 1,000 mark. Contrastingly however, when FAUST was unleashed upon the British public, with its totally clear packaging (album, sleeve and insert) and eye-catching clenched fist design, amongst the wave of German weirdness, the likes of which were being imported by Virgin and Fox Records, it gained a lot of reaction. To quote John Peel: 'When I saw their extraordinary first LP with its equally extraordinary sleeve and felt that, regardless of the music within, I had to acquire one'.

The word "extraordinary" sums up FAUST quite nicely, 35 minutes of excessive invention, a bewildering yet exciting blend of rock, weirdness, parody, and lots of things no one had ever heard before. Opening with distorted electronics and static, snippets of SATISFACTION and ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE break the airways, a piano link brings in an offbeat brass band which in turn is joined by strange collage and vocal effects, and that's just the first 3 minutes! From here on things get even stranger. Even by todays standards FAUST is still a weird album.

Due to their success in England, the next Faust album SO FAR was released here first. Again the packaging was novel, nigh-on all black with a portfolio of art inserts (one representing each track). SO FAR presented a very different Faust, with proper tracks and songs - well, kind of! Here, Faust's humour comes across most strongly, the lyrics to NO HARM - 'Daddy take a banana, tomorrow is Sunday' - are sung repeatedly with such conviction, the listener is always left with the feeling 'do these lyrics really mean anything, or is it all a joke?'. Whatever, SO FAR covers a lot of ground and is a most intelligently produced and performed album, featuring a lot more frenzied rock riffing than previously, richer textured arrangements, and lots of off-the-wall ideas that work incredibly well.

It seems that Polydor (in the UK) began to think of Faust as a pop band, releasing an alternative version of the SO FAR track as a single. An excellent little record, it sadly went by unnoticed.

In the meantime, Wumme had become a renowned studio. Alcatraz, a one album wonder, recorded an album undoubtedly influenced by Faust, yet more towards heavy blues rock (a la Frumpy etc). VAMPIRE STATE BUILDING is well worth the attention of all Faust devotees. Also, the international trio Slapp Happy recorded their debut SORT OF there, and were aided by 3 Faust members.

Technically the third Faust album, OUTSIDE THE DREAM SYNDICATE, was a collaboration with American avant-gardist Tony Conrad. This featured just one very long track per side of monotonous, though not tedious,



*Audion, 1989*

linear music for violin, bass, drums and electronics. The blending of minimalist styles and Faustian rock is a most successful exercise.

Now with the newly founded Virgin Records label, Faust come to England for a debut performance in London. A most curious album followed shortly afterwards: THE FAUST TAPES, part of Virgin's massive publicity campaign, was released at the price of a single (then 48p!) - understandably it sold well! A collection of various archive recordings, THE FAUST TAPES is an inventive and bizarre collection of weird songs, off-the-cuff ideas, freaked out improvisations, wild montages, electronic onslaughts and more, all cleverly segued and edited. As an introduction to Faust, everyone should start here.

To record their fourth album, Faust were invited to The Manor Studios in Oxfordshire. The resultant album FAUST IV was very different to its predecessor proper SO FAR, obviously due to the change of surroundings! Even more deeply rooted in parody, the opener KRAUTROCK is 12 minutes of fuzzed out of proportion rock, relentless, evolving and growing. THE SAD SKINHEAD is a whacky lop-sided reggae song that initially sounds out of place, but as the album develops one sees it as a logical part of the Faust jigsaw - radical but just in the right place.

After further tours with a rapidly changing line-up, Faust eventually disappeared. Rumours are that Nettelbeck lost interest in the band after Virgin (due to a change in policy) refused to release their fifth album. Other rumours abound that they are still together in Germany doing small shows where they invite audiences to join in. Whatever, if this was the end of Faust historically it wasn't the end as far as releases and public interest went.

In 1979, due to the growing rarity value of Faust albums, the newly formed label Recommended Records reissued the first 2 albums with their original packaging, and later a repackaged version of THE FAUST TAPES. Also material from sessions known as "Faust Party #3" was issued on two 7" records as well as a track on the RECOMMENDED RECORDS SAMPLER. These limited editions were later to form the aptly titled THE LAST ALBUM.

Prior to this however, a collection of unreleased live and studio recordings, nicknamed "The Faust Tapes #2", was issued as RETURN OF A LEGEND: MUNIC & ELSEWHERE. The title seemed to confuse some people, believing that Faust had in fact reformed, but not so! The recordings help fill in a few more gaps of the Faust puzzle, giving a glimpse at the intensity of their live work as well as some more extreme facets like the crazed Sixties parody BABY.

THE LAST ALBUM appeared early this year, strictly a limited numbered edition of 1,988 copies, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Recommended Records. it's another excellent collection of tracks that show the extreme diversity of talent that existed in Faust. A few tracks are alternative takes of older recordings, some of the new compositions display hitherto unheard Faust styles.

As far as releases go that's the end of the Faust story, except that rumour has it that the "Faust 5" tapes still exist, and there's also an excellent John Peel session recorded in 1973.

So, even though Faust never made it big in their homeland, as was part of Polydor's original intention, their international reputation and popularity no doubt exceeded expectations for at least a short while. Today, Faust are a highly revered legend, a landmark in German rock history, worthy of everyones attention.

DISCOGRAPHY.

(c- denotes compilations; s- denotes 7" singles;
v- denotes various artist compilations)

1) FAUST (Polydor 2310 142) 9/71
reissue: (Recommended RR 1) 1979
s-1) So Far/It's A Bit Of Pain (Polydor 2001-299) 1972
2) SO FAR (Polydor 2310 196) 3/72
reissue: (Recommended RR 2) 1979
3) OUTSIDE THE DREAM SYNDICATE (Caroline C 1501) 10/72
4) THE FAUST TAPES (Virgin VC 501) 1971-73
reissue: (Recommended RR 6) 1980
5) FAUST IV (Virgin 87739-1T) 6/73
s-2) Extracts From Faust Party 3 (Recommended RR 1.5) 1972 (1979)
s-3) Faust Party 3 Extracts #2 (Recommended RR 6.5) 1972 (1980)
v-1) RECOMMENDED RECORDS SAMPLER, 2LP (Recommended RR 8/9) 1972 (1982)
v-2) Recommended Records Sampler Bonus EP (Recommended RR 8.9) 1972 (1982)
6) MUNIC & ELSEWHERE (Recommended RR 25) 1973-75 (1986)
7) THE LAST LP (ReR 36) 1971-72 (1989)
c-1) 71 MINUTES OF... (ReR f1CD) 1971-75 (1989, CD)

OTHER RELEASES FEATURING FAUST MEMBERS.

Werner Diermaier [WD] — Jean-Herve Peron [JP]
Peter Blegvad [PB] — Uli Trepte [UT]
Kurt Graupner [KG] — Gunter Wusthoff [GW]

8) Guru Guru: UFO (Ohr OMM 56.005) 6/70 [UT]
9) Guru Guru: HINTEN (Ohr OMM 556.017) 6/71 [UT]
10) Alcatraz: VAMPIRE STATE BUILDING (Philips 6305 128) 10/71 [KG]
11) Guru Guru: KANGURU (Brain 1007) 2-3/72 [UT]
12) Slapp Happy: SORT OF (Polydor 2310 204) 1972 [PB,WD,JP,GW]
13) Guru Guru/Uli Trepte: HOT ON SPOT/IN BETWEEN (United Dairies UD 024) 1972/4 [UT]
14) Slapp Happy: ACNALBASAC NOOM (Recommended RR 5) 1973 [PB,JP,WD,GW]
15) Slapp Happy: SAME (Virgin V2014) 1974 [PB,JP]
16) Slapp Happy: DESPERATE STRAITS (Virgin V2024) 1975 [PB]
17) Spacebox: SPACEBOX (Private SP 1) 12/79 [UT]
18) Spacebox: KICK UP (Private SP 2) 9/83 [UT]
19) Peter Blegvad: DOWNTIME (ReR 34) 1988 [PB]

Faust

The Faust Tapes

SPRING 1971 - SEPTEMBER 1971

| ARNULF MEIFERT | WERNER DIERMEIER | HANS-JOACHIM IRMLER | GUNTER WUSTHOFF | RUDOLF SOSNA | JEAN-HERVE PERON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| drums | drums | organ | sax,synth | guitar,keys | bass |
| ? | | | | | |

OCTOBER 1971 - SUMMER 1973

| | WERNER DIERMEIER | HANS-JOACHIM IRMLER | GUNTER WUSTHOFF | RUDOLF SOSNA | JEAN-HERVE PERON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | drums | organ | sax,synth | guitar,keys | bass |
| SLAPP HAPPY | | | | | |
| GURU GURU RELEASE GROUP | | | | | |

SUMMER 1973 - AUTUMN 1973

| PETER BLEGVAD | ULI TREPTE | WERNER DIERMEIER | HANS-JOACHIM IRMLER | GUNTER WUSTHOFF |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| guitar | bass | drums | organ | sax,synth |
| SLAPP HAPPY | SPACEBOX SOLO | | | |

WINTER 1973 - SPRING 1974

| WERNER DIERMEIER | HANS-JOACHIM IRMLER | GUNTER WUSTHOFF | RUDOLF SOSNA | JEAN-HERVE PERON |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| drums | organ | sax,synth | guitar,keys | bass |

Munic & Elsewhere

The Last LP



A couple of minutes before the end another distinct section kicks off with only a sighing synthesiser and slowly paddled drums. These become more prominent while a keyboard wanders aimlessly about as overheard voices are dropped into the mix.

Despite its promising start I don't find the track enough to engage with fully. It is interesting because it shows something of how Faust would develop in future; Irmler's Faust would return to this sound successfully twenty years later. The difference between this and earlier recordings is that this track really hasn't developed any sort of logic of its own or any internal tension. At its core is almost ten minutes of sustained pressure surrounded by a twisting halo of artificial sound. Unfortunately it doesn't gel into a monadic sound world the way it is meant to, in the way similar tracks would gel in future. My guess is that Irmler was heavily involved in its production as it sounds like a first attempt at recording the kind of free-form molten electronic post-rock he and Diermaier mastered on *Ravvivando*.

**Knochentanz** (*aka* **Munic B**, **Munic Other**) is in the same vein - eleven minutes of music trying to coalesce into something with its own identity, mostly failing. A French horn opens up while skeleton ribs are tapped and scraped, all played over a gently pumping organ riff. The drums gradually come forward and warbling electronic tones flit around like so many swooping, diving insects. Sosna's guitar gets another outing too, wandering speculatively around the scene, directionless for once. Shifts and modulations take place, but not because of any detectable inner logic.

A few minutes before the end things become more interesting. The other instruments back off to leave flickering, pattering electronica and a shuddering guitar line, and you are suddenly transported into someone else's anxious dream. But it turns out to be a false dawn as the track finally runs out of energy and ideas altogether just before it stops dead.

This is frustrating music. At the time it was released (some years after its recording) it seemed as though Faust had simply turned into a dead end and stalled just before everyone walked away. With hindsight it is obvious that these are the tentative,

rough drafts of an entirely new sound for the band, leaning completely on the Surrealist wing of Faust's constitution. Twenty years later a new Faust would return, playing in just this mode and making it their own. Jochen has claimed that on these recordings each track was carefully engineered to contribute to the total effect, but it is hard to hear a 'total effect'. Maybe he is talking about another mix of the material we didn't get to hear, because in these versions the problem is precisely that the whole is rarely anything more than a collision of parts. **Munic A** and **Munic B** fail to achieve coherence or any quality that would let them exist independently. At the same time, enough work has gone into making them coherent that you don't get the violent twists and turns of *The Faust Tapes* either.

Why do the Munich recordings ultimately disappoint? At root it is because by now we expect Faust's music to erupt from somewhere beyond the limits of our expectations, offering something new time after time. Any system is complete just so long as it excludes the data incompatible with itself, but we expect Faust's music to somehow keep expanding by throwing off and reabsorbing this new data, relating it to their evolving system and making sense of chaos. We expect to be surprised.

Whether through a collision of personalities or forms, a deliberate, painstaking strategy, or just the random confrontation of people and material, precisely *how* the new emerges isn't the main thing. Whatever the technique, its only task is to split apart what exists by confounding it with something other than itself and, through that, open up the possibility of the new. What we get instead with the Munich recordings is a mass of sonic material thrown together without enough of it every quite falling into a meaningful relationship with the rest. There's sometimes even an air of desperation as the parts jostle to sit together without ever finally convincing. Plenty of the music here is still of interest, and there are some fine passages of music (not to mention that the album is almost a template for some of the post-rock you could hear a decade or more later), but by now we are greedy. Our expectations have been raised and we want more.



# Elsewhere

After slipping away from Munich the group fell into a deep silence. There was no official break-up and no press release. Everyone involved assumed at first that they would soon reunite. But it didn't happen, at least not for some years. As far as the rest of the world was concerned Faust simply disappeared. The rapidity and completeness of their vanishing act only fuelled an already impressive mystique.

The next few years were the group's dark ages. Nothing was heard from or about them. The punk revolution did its best to throw rock's values into reverse, overturning manufactured heroes and redefining the musical landscape, which meant that people had plenty of things to think about other than the disappearance of a group still seen by many as just the extreme wing of German progressive rock and hippiedom. Members of the group made occasional, largely unreported individual appearances, but Faust as such seemed to have evaporated into the mists of legend without further explanation.

It was during this time that Chris Cutler took up the torch, starting a program of reissuing Faust's back catalogue to keep it available to curious listeners. Between 1979 and 1988 Recommended Records (ReR), the label Cutler formed with Nick Hobbs, released a steady stream of Faust recordings, starting with reissues of the first two albums in 1979 and followed by a new release for *The Faust Tapes* in 1980. These records were all produced to an extremely high quality. Quite apart from commercial considerations, Recommended's program of re-

releases was clearly a labour of love for the label and its founders. Of the re-released *Clear* and *So Far*, Cutler said: *"These records are pressed to the highest classical standards and we have done everything we can to ensure the highest quality at every stage of the process... We have chosen these two records because we think they are among the most significant of the decade"*.

At the same time that Recommended were reissuing the old material they were also able to license unreleased tapes from various sources. New tracks, alternate versions and the like were excavated from the group's archives by Nettelbeck and others to be released on a series of singles and compilations from the label. By now the audience for Faust's music was starting to warm up. The initial impact of punk had been one-sidedly iconoclastic, but in the longer term it worked to create a generation of listeners who were keener than ever before to hear music previously marginalised and overlooked as too left-field. Once the dust raised by punk started to settle, the audience for Faust's music began an incremental growth that would carry on in the background in fits and starts for another twenty years as the audience slowly caught up with them. Through a large part of that time Recommended Records kept Faust's music before its audience.

The various collections of new material Recommended released mixed together the Munich recordings with recordings from Faust's earlier career, providing an opportunity to review their history and look again at their achievement. The records concerned are *71 Minutes* (1979), *Return of a Legend: Munic and Elsewhere* (1986), *The Last LP* (1989) and *The BBC Sessions* (1996). Many of the tracks were released with titles that numbered them as extracts from the (notional) 'Faust Party Tapes', with the party tape number even replacing the original title, though there is no significance to the numbers assigned as they represent nothing more than the order in which Cutler received the tapes.

The BBC sessions have been released in various permutations, on at least two bootlegs, in two different versions by Recommended and finally as part of the 2006 re-release of





*Faust IV*. They are based on a Peel session broadcast on 1st March 1973, to which a series of unrelated studio outtakes and alternate versions have been added over the years to pad out the releases. While even members of the group have been heard to say that there was no BBC recording session as such, an interview with Nettelbeck exists which clearly took place in the BBC studios at the time. In the course of the interview journalist Karl Dallas describes details of the session as it happened (Melody Maker, March 1973).

The confusion exists because of a combination of broken memories and the fact that at least some of the material broadcast was indeed recorded elsewhere (the version of **Krautrock** appears to be a straightforward remix of the version on *Faust IV*), but that doesn't mean that there was no BBC session to start with. Also, the various releases under this title have different track listings and even contain material recorded long after the BBC broadcast. On balance it seems likely that the broadcast combined BBC recordings with tapes provided for the occasion by Nettelbeck, and that later releases simply added further material from the archives.

The first release on the Klangbad label formed by Péron and Irmler, *Untitled* (Klangbad, 1997), contained remixed versions of a number of early recordings. There was also a release, *Patchwork* (Klangbad, 2002), which collected together stray material from across Faust's history, from the very beginning through the year of the album's release. There are plenty of glimpses into the work of the early Faust on this record, but most have been thoroughly reworked, re-engineered and mixed in with later recordings – the intention seems to have been to create a sort of meta-*Faust Tapes*, spanning the group's entire history. As with *Abzu*, I've mentioned tracks from *Patchwork* only if they seemed substantial enough or especially relevant in some way.

As there is so much overlap between releases, and since none of them are really thematically or historically organised, it seems easier to discuss the tracks in what seems like a rough chronological order. Unless stated otherwise in the notes, all of the material is assumed to have been recorded at Wümme.

**Lieber Herr Deutschland** (*aka* **Demo**, **Party #4**) is the earliest Faust recording we know of. When Polydor were first talking to Nettelbeck they asked for a demo in order to get an idea of what his proposed group would sound like. Faust went to Hamburg's Sternenschanze cellar studio and quickly produced this track by merging location recordings, an existing Nukleus song and music improvised on the day. Asked for a demo, the group wittily decided to deliver precisely that, starting the piece with a recording of a workers' demonstration, asserting their connection with the events of the time, just as they would a year later with the design of the first album. The track begins with the protesters' chant:

*Workers arise!*
*state power to the proletariat!*

The field recording was made by the group - *"in those days, it was everyday routine to take part to at least two demos a day, so we had no problem getting this Kampf parolen"* (JHP). After the chanting the track explodes into a free form freak-out, the demonstration breaking out into a riot. Drums hurtle around the soundspace, strings are thrashed and scraped until the chaos winds down against the backdrop of a bowed bass. At this point the original Nukleus song kicks in, the drums returning with a stripped down 4/4 beat over which an electrifying, stuttering guitar riff bursts in. Rudolf is in an immaculate mood here, playing one of the filthiest, most propulsive riffs he ever coined. I could happily listen to this for some time but the group cruelly derail rockist instincts by fading the guitar immediately into the background, leaving space for two voices to take over in the left and right channels, reading out the factory instructions for a new washing machine and mocking the passivity of consumer culture:

*The future-assured fully-automatic washing machine must be opened at the top so that you can remove the ironing-free washing, dripping wet and smooth from the rinser.*

*The future-assured fully-automatic washing machine has a special wash programme for every fabric.*





*The future-assured fully-automatic washing machine offers you everything that a future-assured fully-automatic washing machine can offer you - for example, a light panel so you can follow the wash programme precisely, and the fully automatic washing powder input, so you don't have to think any more.*

The lyrics see Faust once again looking over their shoulder to the radical movement of the time, a movement unprecedented in being marked as much by a rejection of consumer culture as by its calls for troops out of Vietnam, black power, women's rights and demands for better pay and conditions. If you didn't know that the concept for the recording was inspired by a pun on the idea of a 'demo' you'd take this for slice of straightforward, incendiary rock politicking. The mood reflects the anger and determination of the period as well as the obvious cynicism in the face of consumer palliatives.

After a few seconds of tape manipulation the song drops down a gear for its conclusion. Meifert's drums play impressionist patterns around which Sosna weaves the slightest of melodies. Péron's lyrics are largely impenetrable apart from their promise of *"a very faint explosion"*. This section, the second half of the track, feels like a studio improvisation tacked on to give the recording the length of a regular song. Toward the end everyone gets a little too excited by the studio's reverb and echo units. It is a shame that the Nukleus song buried in the track here was never brushed off and given the full studio treatment – it has the makings of an epic Faust track.

Given that this was the band's demo to Polydor, it seems reasonable to treat the recording as a manifesto. Admittedly the critical, revolutionary themes addressed are only implicit from now on, rather than openly stated or, as in this case, thrown in your face, but they set the tone perfectly for Faust's heroic age and the recordings through to Munich.

**Sax Manipulation Room** consists of saxophone and rhythm recordings layered together, with the playback speed

of each altered to create drones, squeals and similar varispeed effects – very much a studio exercise. **Party #6** is a blast of grating synthesised distortion. At just over half a minute long it makes little sense by itself and usually appears as an opening for **Giggy Smile**.

**Giggy Smile** (**Party #1**) is the version of the song released as a single by Recommended Records and compiled on several album and CDs. An instrumental jazz-rock nursery rhyme, its looping simplicity is at the same time twisted and angular enough to stick forcibly in the mind. The spoken section at the end is from Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, his tale of degradation as a beggar in Paris. In the book the words are spoken by Van Norden, a sex-obsessed character based on the improbably named real-world author and journalist, Wambly Bald:

> *"You think I like myself," he continues. "That shows how little you know about me. I know I'm a great guy ... I wouldn't have these problems if there weren't something to me. But what eats me up is that I can't express myself. People think I'm a cunt-chaser. That's how shallow they are, these high-brows who sit on the terrasse all day chewing the psychologic cud. That's not so bad, eh - psychologic cud? Write it down for me. I'll use it in my column next week".*

The **Party #2** version of **J'ai Mal Aux Dents** is a different recording of the track from *The Faust Tapes*. This time the cycling between central riff and free form release is dropped, and the song becomes even more brutally driving and single-minded. The drums are more prominent in the mix as well as sounding looser than before, lending the track yet more propulsive clout, and a crunching keyboard solo is added that comes close to actually ripping through the speakers. Without evidence either way I'd guess that this is an earlier take, and I prefer the track like this, stripped down to its essence as loutish Krautrock. It is this reductive version that both Ectogram and S/T took as the template for their versions.

**Chromatic** (**Party #3**) is a nugget of dark electronica that winds gently on for almost ten minutes. The keyboard line





sounds arpeggiated and plays over piano, (broken-) metronomic bass drum and a chain of slowly modulated, filtered bass notes. The chords are corny triads and the piece is played so slowly that it is stripped of any normal dynamic. For a group renowned for their awesome cacophony, Faust had the happy knack of also being able to create music of crystalline purity, this being a case in point. At the same time the synthesiser line is gradually distorted, Zappi's drumming is constructively unreliable and chords are detuned in a way that stops this short of being only jewellery-box-cute.

It is hard to think of anyone at the time making music like this other than perhaps Cluster. You could argue that this is a studio sketch which doesn't deserve the length allowed it here, but it is more than just an interesting idea nonetheless.

A rallying call, a promise and a manifesto rolled into one, Sosna's **25 Yellow Doors** (**Party #5**) opens with a jack-in-the-box guitar leaping out at you from the speakers, accompanied by gloopy synthesiser. It declares itself from the start as a great Faust song, demented pop music in the tradition of Arthur Brown or Tom Waits. Yellow being the colour of fun, and taking the pumpkin as a stand-in for your head, the lyrics seem to be about Faust and how their music works on the listener's brain. Presumably the yellow doors are what you get when you carve holes into the pumpkin to make a halloween head.

> *25 yellow doors and the waltz of the pumpkin /*
> *25 yellow doors in the walls of the pumpkin*
> *we're coming through!!*

The song feels unfinished, which is presumably why it never made it onto one of the original releases. After a glorious chorus combining Sosna's lead with yet more weirded-out synthesiser and the feel of a circus parade, the song declines into a halting improvisation. Cleaned up, it would have made a fitting addition to *Faust IV*, in the vein of **Jennifer** and **The Sad Skinhead**.

The alternate **Lauft (**here called **Psalter**, elsewhere **13/8**) is a straight take, or maybe even just a remix of the version we know. You might like to know that Wikipedia, the online

encyclopedia, has an entry on 'irregular time signatures' that, curiously, lists **Giggy Smile** but not **Psalter** as an example of 13/8 time (though maybe they were just deceived by the treacherous track listing on *Faust IV*), along with tracks by The Stranglers ("Golden Brown"), Rush ("Jacob's Ladder") and Zappa ("Thirteen").

The version of **So Far** included on the CD release of the *BBC Sessions* takes the electronic effects of the original further, turning the track into an even more abstract foray than the original. On the *Untitled* album the same recording (this time entitled **Not Nearest By)** is re-engineered and remixed by Jochen Irmler to sound punchier and brighter than ever before – the same goes for the version of **Krautrock** on the album, which also earned itself a new name there, **A '70s Event**.

**Party #8** uses what sounds like guitar harmonics to create a feel bordering on folk-electronica. Though recorded at Wümme, **Party #9** at first has the hesitant, inconclusive feel of the Munich recordings, echoed drums playing lazily with occasional smears of detail added by other instruments, gradually turning into a loose rock work-out with nothing special to recommend it at first. To its credit it soon starts to turn into something more





satisfying, though it never makes it into the first rank. With so much recorded at Wümme – songs, experiments, improvisations - it was inevitable that there would be releases like this, tentative and maybe incomplete, if you want to put it that way. In a different world there would have been time either to work these recordings up somehow or weave them properly into other constructions.

**Don't Take Roots** is a patchwork of cartoon effects, gnomic voices and cackling laughter, stealing its lyric from the track **Me Lack Space**: *"Don't take roots! Don't retire!"* (*See p67*). It is easy to imagine it as an interlude on either *So Far* or *Faust IV*. The following track, **Baby**, is in a similar vein, Diermaier taking over the vocals for another round of Faustian reductivism, in which the push-push-in-the-bush fixation of rock lyricism is condensed into its beautiful, base form:

> *aaah, baby!*
> *are you coming to the cinema with me?*
> *aaah, baby!*
> *And after that we'll go for a meal.*
> *And after that we'll go dancing.*
> *And after that we'll go screwing.*

What could be clearer? Zappi barks the lyrics and, once they are done with, the song speeds up into a storm of cycling tom drums, whining feedback and Sosna's pattering guitars. With **Baby** too, the version on the *Untitled* album (**Komm Mit**) benefits from Irmlers remix.

Recorded at the Manor House, **360°** begins as a raw cut-up, the sound of everyday life, with recordings of a dog barking, metallic rattling and general clamour as a German woman reads out the program of events at the local cinema. A child's voice breaks in to sing 'happy birthday' to Jean-Hervé. A stoned Faust then try to gather their forces - Sosna on guitar, wringing value for money from his Binson echo unit, Irmler playing a simple organ line and perhaps Wüsthoff working the piano - but nothing happens to make this anything more than a curio. **Party #10** is in the same vein, a minute-long draft of an acoustic song accompanied by Kurt Graupner playing a comb and cigarette

paper – his only known appearance on record. Graupner's part was originally to be played on a trumpet and then on a kazoo, but the trumpet was damaged and the kazoo went missing, and then Graupner remarked that he could play his comb instead, hence the lyric: *"j'ai oublie d'accorder ma trompette, j'ai pris un peigne et mon ami pour te chanter ceci: hoopla!" (I've forgotten to tune my trumpet, so I took a comb and my friend to sing this to you: hoopla!")*

What is marked up, confusingly, as **Party #1** on the *BBC Sessions* CD is not the version of **Giggy Smile** you might expect but a drum workout accompanied by studio treated percussion. As with **360°** and **Party #10** this sounds like a Wümme outtake, a studio experiment saved from oblivion for the benefit of the curious and completists.

**We Are The Hallo Men**, on the other hand, might have been intended for release despite its rough edges. With its lyric slurred drunkenly by Sosna over a slowly accelerating thump of a beat, and a musical accompaniment consisting largely of backward running tapes (curiously, Sonny and Cher singing *"the beat goes on"*), it is interesting largely for the fact that the lyric lifts its inspiration wholesale from Eliot's "The Wasteland", even if it isn't at all clear where Sosna wanted to take the idea. Compare Faust's version:

*We are the hollow men*
*We are the stuffed men*
*Leaning together*
*Close to the ones who cry*
*to the grumbled mood moon*
*coming home moaning home*
*you can count to dry pet*
*you can lick to a wet pant*
*you can grade to the jet set*

with the original:

*We are the hollow men*
*We are the stuffed men*
*Leaning together*
*Headpiece filled with straw*





*Our dried voices, when*
*We whisper together*
*Are quiet and meaningless*
*As wind in dry glass*
*Or rats' feet over broken glass*
*In our dry cellar*

If it is not pushing the flimsy evidence further than it can carry, the image of Sosna drunk at Wümme, contemplating Eliot's hollow men, stuffed and meaningless, maybe gives a clue to the state of mind that led to his death.

The 1973 Peel session consisted of a remixed version of **Krautrock** framed by two otherwise unreleased songs – the most likely candidates for having actually been recorded at the BBC. **The Lurcher** features long and loose saxophone accompaniment from Wüsthoff over workmanlike drumming and a surprisingly ordinary bass. It starts to run out of steam after a few minutes but is rescued by the intervention of keyboard and guitar, which turn it into something like a film soundtrack. As an instrumental it is easy-going, and its most distinctive feature consists of the fact that it is so oddly conventional – you would be hard pressed to recognise the group if you didn't already know. The last part of the session is made up of a version of **Stretch Out Time**, re-titled **Do So**, which follows the original closely but adds new electronic effects and a wandering, mournful sax break at the end. Compared to the version we are familiar with there seems to be more going on, though it is still not fully polished.

Off the various cutoffs and outtakes collected on *Patchwork*, **Drone Organ** and **Elegie** are mildly interesting keyboard experiments. **Tourbotrain** has its moments too, built as it is from moaning bass feedback. But these are all ultimately the kind of things that would have been whittled down and used only to make just a passing point on earlier albums, tucked neatly away like some of the Exercises on *The Faust Tapes* perhaps. **Out of Our Prison** sounds almost substantial by comparison, its looped voices putting you in mind of parts of the first album.

The only Recommended outtake to have been recorded at Virgin's Manor House, **Das Meer** offers a gentle and unobtrusive progressive rock instrumental. It sounds for all the world like the section of Eno's *Another Green World* used as the theme tune to the BBC arts show *Arena*, music described by one online reviewer as *"the most perfect evocation of 'modern highbrow' that ever there was."* **Das Meer** really does sound as bloodless as that banal but deadly accurate description suggests; whoever made it sounds bored and out of ideas. The same recording was called **Piano Piece** when included on the re-released and extended *Faust IV*.



# On Returning

*My method will be very simple. I will tell of what I have loved; and, in this light, everything will become evident.*

***Guy Debord***

Faust's disappearance on escaping Munich was, for a while, complete. As far as the record buying public were concerned not only did the group as such vanish, so did its members. As Faust were perceived more as an occult force than a group of flesh and blood musicians it never really occurred to anyone to ask whether they would do anything quite so ordinary as reform.

In the meantime everyone got on with their life. Meifert had already returned to his job in Bavaria as a set designer after his sacking. He later mentored other artists while continuing to make music. Graupner and Nettelbeck went back to their respective careers as engineer and promoter, both achieving success. Wüsthoff found work as a graphic designer, an artist and writer, and as a courier for a film company. Diermaier drove a taxi and organized occasional 'happenings' and multimedia events. Péron left for Crete to start a family, while Irmler at least managed to find enough work to get by.

When the band did finally reform it was only after a series of fits and starts stretching over a period of almost a decade, where a core of members (Irmler, Diermaier and Péron) met and played together in *ad hoc* combinations. In 1978 Irmler had moved back to Hamburg to make music, and he soon hooked up with Diermaier again. Eventually Péron moved back into the area too to rejoin them. Wüsthoff was contacted at one point but

had no interest in working with the group again. Rudolf too was contacted and even rejoined the group for a rehearsal, but by now his drinking made him incapable of working with anyone, so he went home while the others started occasional work as a trio.

Rudolf never did manage to acclimatise to civilian life. Having moved to Italy when the band first broke up, and depressed by Faust's failure to become a headline rock group or achieve some sort of wider breakthrough, he slowly drank himself to death. In 1997 his body was discovered in the bath by a girlfriend. On the death certificate the cause of death was given as liver disease.

Throughout the whole of the '80s there were only three performances by the group, in Hamburg, Wilhelmsburg and Braunschweig. Then things started to pick up - *"by the end of the Eighties we felt that the time was right because musically everything was so boring"* (HJI) - and the core of the group began to meet and play together more regularly. There were reunion concerts in 1990 at the Prinzenbar in Hamburg, and in 1992 at London's Marquee. Slowly the band began to work together more consistently. They eventually made the album *Rien* (Table of the Elements, 1994), produced by Jim O'Rourke and based on recordings from a 1994 tour of the US by Péron and Diermaier, where the line-up was augmented by Keiji Haino, Michael Morley and Steve Wray Lobdell (Davis Redford Triad, Sufi Mind Game).

Irmler and Péron then formed the Klangbad label to release their own and others' records, producing the electrifying *you know faUSt* (1997), which had the feel of the original band, as powerful and focused as ever, as well as assorted singles and live recordings. Steve Lobdell - an astounding guitarist in his own right, whose group, Davis Redford Triad, have made a series of increasingly intense records - came on board as a permanent member of the group, along with Lars Paukstat on percussion. Eventually Péron left over a combination of financial and musical disagreements (*"he got a bit difficult to handle"*, HJI), and control of the company reverted to Irmler and his partner Cornelia Paul. The split took place on grounds that echo the band's long-term schizophrenia, with Irmler wanting





to concentrate on the studio construction of noise, while Péron preferred Faust in live performance, lyrical and spontaneous.

Diermaier and Irmler continued to record as Faust, recruiting Michael Stoll to replace Péron on bass and creating the magnificent surrealist 'river of bass' recordings captured on *Nosferatu* (Klangbad, 1997), *Live in Edinburgh* (Klangbad, 1997) and, especially, *Ravivvando* (Klangbad, 1999) and *The Land of Ukko and Rauni* (Ektro, 2000). In the last two recordings Irmler and Diermaier finally recaptured something of the sound and approach of their first group together, Campylognatus Citelli. The group also made incendiary live appearances playing largely improvised music.

Irmler has released an astounding solo album, *Lifelike* (Klangbad 2003), notable for the kind of rarefied electronic textures usually associated with abstract electro-acoustics and acousmatics, as well as occasionally playing alongside Clive Bell, Mike Adcok, Sylvia Hallett and Mike Svoboda in the free music ensemble Paper Factory, recorded on *Schlachtfest Session 1* (Klangbad, 2005).

At the end of 2004 Diermaier jumped ship, abandoning Irmler to rejoin Péron in another version of Faust, so there were now two groups working under the name. Arnulf Meifert returned temporarily to Irmler's Faust for a performance in 2005 at the annual Scheer festival held at the site where Irmler built the Klangbad studio, after which he retreated again, though not before making recordings with Irmler which have yet to see a release. Péron recruited Olivier Manchion and Amaury Cambuzat

of Ulan Bator to create a version of Faust which paid more attention to the group's legacy, playing old songs and new to fans who lapped them up with enthusiasm even though it was thirty years since some of them had been recorded. Many among the new audience were yet to be been born when these songs were first heard. And that was the situation in 2006: two versions of the group working in parallel, effectively in competition with one another.

Both versions of Faust continue to tour and record. Both, in different ways, sound more in tune with their times than ever before, and both have found plenty of resonance among today's listeners and musicians. Evidence for this could be found at the summer festivals hosted by the different camps in recent years - Péron and Diermaier at Schiphorst in northern Germany, and Irmler at Scheer in the south – which between them manage to attract the widest possible range of artists, with groups crossing the spectrum from avant garde electronica and electro-acoustics to the new folk music, as well as the punk-psychedelia of Ectogram and S/T, openly influenced by Faust.

Despite releasing their share of fine and interesting records, and despite astounding concerts by both incarnations of the group, there can be no doubt that the work for which Faust will be remembered best has already been recorded. This is not to dismiss the modern Faust; it simply recognises that their earliest work was so remarkable that it can't be compared.

As for the group's influence and legacy, while at one point it looked as though they might be smothered by time, recent years have seen recognition bloom. In the earliest stages there was a danger that the group would be recuperated as freaks, tamed by being remembered only as wild men. But increasingly they are being recognised for their real contribution - their music. It seems that, thirty years on, the world is finally catching up with their awesome achievement.

Faust-Studio
Opening Festival
Scheer
20./21./22. August 2004
2nd KLANGBAD FESTIVAL
12 - 14 AUGUST, SCHEER
Faust

DAVIS REDFORD TRIAD
CODE ORANGE
SLAPP HAPPY
ACNALBASAC NOOM
Slapp Happy
faust
PATCH WORK
STAR TREEF
Faust
The Wumme Years
1970-73
abzu
8-Track
faust in Japan

Faust
faust
La Kuizine
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2005
1996-
STEREOLAB
FOETUS
faust
UBERSCHALL 1996
faust
RIEN
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you
know
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faust
FAUST
"Right between ye eyes"
STEREOLAB
"Resolutions"
FOETUS
faust
faust
nosferatu
faust
rarvivando remix
dave ball (soft cell)
& ingo vauk

Enhanced Gravity
KLANGBAD
FIRST STEPS
progressive
RADIO GOETHE
PRESENTS
GERMAN BANDS
VOL. II
RADIO GOETHE
presents
GERMAN BANDS
Vol. III
RECOMMENDED RECORDS SAMPLER
RESONANCE
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FAUST
JOHN FRENCH
BUTCH MORRIS
ALTERED STATES
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GEORGE LEWIS
FONG NAAM
CHARLES HAYWARD
CHARLES WHARF & SIMON H. FELL
LONDON ELECTRIC GUITAR ORCHESTRA
space explosion
ROUGH TRADE
Enhanced Gravity
VIRGIN SOUND
faust
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LIFE
LIKE

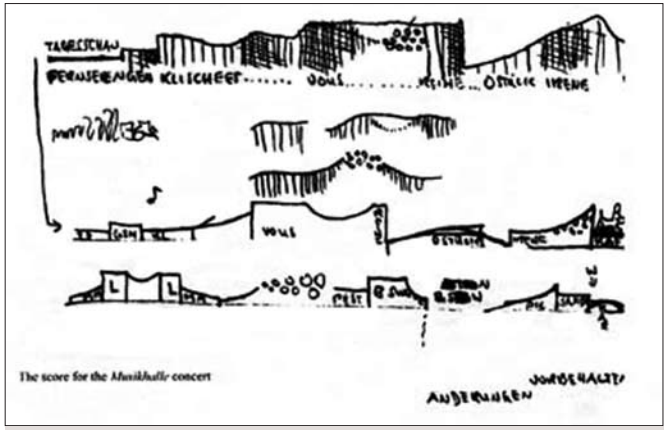
# Faust Live

*As I didn't see Faust play in their first incarnation, I leave it to others to describe events.*

## Musikhalle Debut

### Hamburg Musikhalle, 1971

In the wake of their first album, Faust set about planning their live debut. But, increasingly unhappy with the group's lack of a public profile, Polydor once more forced their hand, resulting in a disastrous concert at Hamburg's *Musikhalle*. *"Faust always wanted to go new ways,"* Irmler states. *"That included finding new technical set-ups. Live we wanted to work with multiple speakers, an early version of surround sound where we could precisely project the sound, like a focused little ball. The idea was to involve the whole audience*




*Score for the Musikhalle concert*





*in the sound. A month ago I visited our engineer at the time, Kurt Graupner, and we talked about this. He said he wished that Polydor had given us three more months to prepare our live set-up. If they had he was sure there would have been a revolution."*

On the night, the concert took on the air of a Fluxus event. First, the audience were asked to come back later in the evening when the group were ready. Still unable to make anything work, Faust turned on a bank of colour TVs to let the audience watch the news, while Diermaier toppled a tower of empty tin cans that he had painstakingly put together for the planned finale. The German press leapt at the chance to beat them down, with headlines like "Faust's Rock Damnation".

*from David Keenan,* ***Kings of the Stone Age,*** *The Wire, 22nd March 2003.*

Six months of preparation for a musical experiment and the result is a disaster - for the musicians, naturally. Deutsche Grammophon got out of it OK. They will refund their investments from advertising and development budgets and so the whole adventure will soon be headlined 'once upon a time...' Uwe Nettelbeck, Faust's 'spiritual father', has neglected his a-musical children - children, who thought they could play the game of the entertainment business and didn't realise that the business played with them.

*Walter Adler,* ***Galerie der Entertainer****, WDR television, 1971.*

## Sturm und Drang

### Plymouth Guildhall, 19th May 1973

*"I never expected anything like this,"* exclaimed a small enthusiastic person who occupied the seat next to mine in Plymouth's famous Guildhall on May 19 last. The occasion was Faust's first British gig ever, their fourth appearance on a live

stage of any kind and by far the most exciting musical event I personally have witnessed for the past three years.

But I can tell you one thing. I was worried. I was warned about the person on my right (not the enthusiastic one but another one on the other side) and the band. I had heard all about German bands. They were, I fondly believed, the type of people who put pictures of ketchup-covered ears on the sleeves of their albums or appeared on stage in jackboots and gold lederhosen. Furthermore (yet more of my fond belief) they were very 'eavy and had no sense of humour. These qualities, along with the boots, I felt sure they shared with the person sitting next to me I was worried about, a very greasy-haired individual wearing a vilely studded leather jacket. As soon as I sat down and took in my surroundings, there grew within me the conviction that I was in for an evening of very boring excruciating pain.

Even in retrospect, it is difficult to decide where my chief surprise lay. To my intense delight, Faust's music on that gilded evening established them beyond any question as the doyen of the German bands. Their protracted, electronic, often entirely a-rhythmic, music was never ponderous, never over-weighty. It was, on the contrary, light, delicately conceived and often humorous. I was amazed and I continued in that state (rare indeed for a sceptic such as I) for two hours, when the music stopped and I received my second great surprise.

The audience was pretty well sharply divided into small enthusiastic people (all from good homes) and surly artisans with leather jackets. I myself was stateless. But, after the performance, not an artisan moved a muscle. Gentlemanly young hippies though were everywhere, rushing into the aisles to perform their wild licentious dances during the rapturously received encore. My companion would have done so too had not an astonishing blow from the man on my right felled him where he sat.

The audience I shall never understand. But prompted by the concert, I listened to Faust on record. They are magnificent.

*Ian MacDonald,* ***Sturm und Drang****, New Musical Express, 1973.*





I've no clear idea of what was going on at this concert at all. Faust, hardly the most publicised of bands, appear suddenly at Plymouth Town Hall on a Saturday night, take the stage amid a spider's web of leads and wires, play for over two hours in acoustics that swallow half their sound, and then just stop - only to be called back by an audience, jiving in the aisles, for a further twenty minutes of improvised encore.

*"Danke schön"* says Jean-Hervé Péron, cautiously.

*"More!"* says the audience, stamping its many feet.

I don't get it.

Plymouth is only the sixth gig Faust have ever played. Masters of the studio, they've been trying to work out how to play their music live for nearly two years and the set they're doing now is still only a rough stab at it. Obviously nervous, the group didn't attempt any of their more complicated material and performed what they did attempt rather shakily. They have no stage 'presence' at all and spent much time between numbers tuning up or fiddling around with the 'black boxes' with which they control and mix their own sound. The audience really dug them.

I could understand the attraction of their live electronics: the opening ten minutes played by Hans-Joachim Irmler and Gunter Wüsthoff from behind a heap of consoles at the back, were vital and fascinating. I was as impressed as anybody by **It's a Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl** which, on record, doesn't get off the ground (sic), but here seemed to be the nearest music will ever get to pure energy. 'Zappa' (sic) Diermaier pounded on his phased drums...

*Steve Peacock,* ***Live in Plymouth****, Sounds, 1973.*

## *Live at The Rainbow*

### *London Rainbow, 10th June 1973*

London's Rainbow looked like a Berliner Ensemble production of a rock musical version of Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse 5." The stage backdrop had been raised, revealing the grey back wall

of the theatre, which had distinct prison-camp overtones in the subdued light.

Faust's equipment was grouped mid-stage, an island of anonymous electronic gear huddling together, as if for comfort, in the centre of a vast emptiness.

At the four corners of the stage, pointing at the members of the band, were four TV sets, one of them in colour, with the sound turned down.

The houselights went down and the band came on, but there was no compensating brightening on stage as the great washes of electronic sound began to swell out of the speakers. With the exception of the drummer, it was impossible to distinguish anybody - which is how the band wants it.

It was also hard to distinguish when one song ended and another began, which even the band must have realised, to judge by the murmured *"danke schön"* which came over the speakers, telling us it was time to applaud.

This is a band of not one style but many, for since it ranges over the entire spectrum of modern music, taking what it needs from any and all, the resulting mix can very from gentle, acoustic sounds to the hard-driving near-mesmeric rock of **It's a Rainy Day, Sunshine Baby**.

At one stage they turned up the sound of the TV sets to introduce a random, John Cage-type element elements to the proceedings, with opera star Beverly Stills' voice playing an unwitting part, since BBC2 was transmitting a programme of her singing at that time.

At another time they began talking to each other over the p.a. - something that a couple of members of the audience joined in with some enthusiasm.

I have a feeling, as the band plays in public more and more often, that their music will become more accessible and its members will become less and less anonymous.

And the next time they play the Rainbow, it's going to be a whole lot harder to get in.

*Karl Dallas,* ***Live at The Rainbow****, Melody Maker, 1973.*





## *We're Just Trying To Be Here Now*

As the current Faust tour of Britain rambles erratically to a conclusion, one has to own up that, far from progressively clarifying themselves and their music to their audience, Faust breed confusion and controversy wherever they go.

But that's only natural. Faust are, in a sense, professional confusers - both of their listeners and of themselves. They thrive on not knowing what they're doing. They don't lead the way so much as stumble on something new and then chase after it, tripping over each other's imaginations.

If they catch the idea they quickly get bored with it. If it outruns them and disappears over the horizon, they're left milling about in unmapped country and sometimes solve the situation by going to sleep until the official cartographer turns up.

Thus, their recent appearance at London's Rainbow started out strongly, striding swiftly through the areas Faust have previously explored into new peripheral lands for the existence of which the listener must sometimes accept only the group's word.

Then, about a quarter of an hour in, the general consensus appeared to be that they needed more sandwiches or graph paper or whatever, and the characteristic Faustian sit-down ensued.

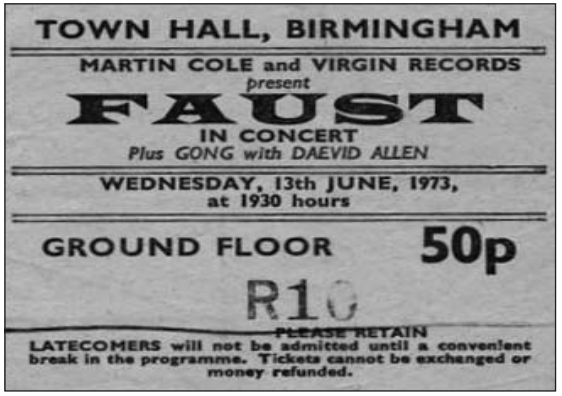
Considering that Faust are visiting the frontiers far more frequently than most, it seems churlish to chide them for the moments in which their imagination gets tired. However, a rock audience at the very least wants to enjoy itself - and, in any case, even the front-runners of the avant-garde owe some responsibility to coherence and communication...

*Ian MacDonald,* ***We're Just Trying To Be Here Now****, New Musical Express, 1973.*

# Birmingham

## Birmingham Town Hall, 13th June 1973

... The group's English sojourn also marked the beginning of Faust's Industrial phase, a scrapyard methodology that still informs their current incarnation. *"I remember we were in Birmingham for a show and near the concert hall I saw a man using a huge jackhammer in a construction site,"* recalls Diermaier. *"I thought it was a fantastic musical instrument and so I asked him to play in the concert with us that night. I wanted him to come in his working overalls but he turns up in a really smart three-piece suit with his entire family. We had a big stone on the stage and we covered it with tarpaulin so he wouldn't spray shards over the audience. He started the machine right on cue but then he lost control and just kept playing until the concert was over. At the end he was just grinning, he looked so pleased with himself. After that we began to use a lot of construction tools on stage and later other German groups like Einstürzende Neubauten took that on. We rented equipment in every town we played, anything that made a sound, cement mixers, sanders, sheets of metal. We were also using pinball machines that triggered sounds and incorporating live TV broadcasts into our sets" ...*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IN CONCERT
Plus GONG with DAEVID ALLEN
WEDNESDAY, 13th JUNE, 1973,
at 1930 hours
GROUND FLOOR 50p
R10
PLEASE RETAIN
LATECOMERS will not be admitted until a convenient break in the programme. Tickets cannot be exchanged or money refunded.

*from David Keenan,* ***Kings of the Stone Age,*** *The Wire, 22nd March 2003.*





# Faust / Henry Cow

## Reading Town Hall, 21st September 1974

The current Virgin Records tour, which began at Reading Town Hall, is a fascinating study in contrasts. First there is Henry Cow, a people's band in the true sense of the term, making conscious moves towards audience involvement, all flashing smiles and good humour.

And then there's Faust, perpetuating their early Velvet Underground mystique; the stage swamped in darkness save for the occasional eerie flickering from television sets that are the band's 'props'.

On this night, the humble Cow suffered slightly from unfamiliarity with a new P.A. system, and some of the finer points of their free improvisation were lost in the Hall's barn-like acoustics. Most satisfying was the riffy "Teenbeat", with its usual generous helping of the Fred Frith guitar, which never fails to amaze.

Faust were something else. I mean, how do you assess the stage presence of a band that you can't see? Shadowy figures could only just be perceived as Faust sat hunched over electronic consoles and conventional instrumentation, spasmodically offering spoken vocals in a choice of three languages - English, German and French.

And, if the strain of performing gets too much of a grind, the players would take it in turns to flip petulantly at a pinball machine, placed stage right for Faust's own amusement.

The music itself, incorporating many repetitive devices, seemed to be based on the old Zen premise that says if something is boring for sixteen minutes, try it for thirty-two.

Faust and Henry Cow are both well worth investigating. Together they provide a total musical experience that is too valu-

able by far to miss out on. Catch this tour if it comes your way, a better balanced concert bill would be hard to find.

*Steve Lake, **Faust / Henry Cow**, Melody Maker, 6th October 1974.*



# Faust Manifesto

*This manifesto was handed out on Faust's 1973 tour of the UK.*

### *SITUATIONS*

in preparation: a piece to be performed in time, during Faust's forthcoming tour of England. not so much an experience as a situation. to which one is highly subject.

### *INFLUENCE*

a list called 'thus' on which you and Faust appear also includes the Heisenberg principle, anti-matter, Hitler, relativity, cybernetics, DNA, game theory, etc. "something's in the air".

### *ABSURD DECISIONS*

this is the time we are in love with. the Absurd was ushered in & seated in the place of honour. this was an attempt to render the absurd impotent. it failed. the Absurd, it is now decided, has medicinal properties, the Absurd, it is now discovered, decides! but that was now, learning to eat time with one's ears. savouring each moment - distinct as a dot of braille. how *located* the you you see you as is. is that location drawn towards definition by attending to this outrageous cacophony?

this is the time we are in love with. in the midst of Faust-musik time ticks like a bomb. in its midst the sour fuse of love is sniffed out and relit again and again! why all this strangeness? the answer is something to do with polishing mirrors to reflect

time and love. a reflection has no memory. that is the strangeness of it. but it means nothing.

## *NOTHING*

Faust have mentioned that working as they do in the space between concept and realisation they are in fact doing nothing. Faust would like to play for you the *sound of yourself listening*.

then we would have consciousness.
then we could talk about altering that consciousness.
then we could forget about music.

"Hollowing caves of bass with mallets of wool they played, leaving the treble shriek to gel in a slit in the moon they played."

*Peter Blegvad & Co,* ***"Faust Manifesto"****, Faust 1973*

# Fruit Flies Like a Banana

*In Faust-musik, time ticks like a bomb.*
***Faust Manifesto**, 1973*

*Music does not last, it has nothing to do with time.*
***Sergiu Celibidache***

Zappa thought time was 'a spherical concept' so that, in a manner of speaking, everything happens at once. Gnostics and Buddhists agree, believing that you can enter the gates of eternity in an instant, and that time is one of the world's illusions. William Burroughs and Sun Ra thought that to survive at all we need to evolve 'out of time, into space'.

These ideas paint time as a mystery and a problem, very different to the common sense impressions we live by, according to which time is just a neutral and empty framework in which things happen. In fact the procession of the moments of official time, strung together like the beads of a necklace, help maintain the worlds of consumerism and exploitation. Luckily for the quality of existence you can sometimes snap the thread of linear time to let the beads roll - but how?

The question bears on everything to do with music, the way it is made and marketed, sold and consumed. Music seems so peculiarly involved with time as to be saturated with it. Much of what music achieves is a result only of its dialogue with time. Take a snapshot of the light around you and you have a photograph you might look at; try the same with sound and all you have is a reading of air pressure. At best you might get a





map of pressure states at different points in space, an image of sound, but you don't have sound and you certainly don't have music. It is only by experiencing fluctuating air pressure over time that you have an experience of sound (and even that isn't yet a musical experience). Notice too that once a photograph is taken the reality it depicts is gone forever, while a moment of music is always somehow smeared between times. Among other things, music does the diabolical work of holding past and future together.

Most music is rooted in empty time, the tick-tocking of wage slavery and boredom, the time of the eternal return of the present, of the market and its drizzle of ersatz gratifications. This is also the time of clock watching and of the 'second nature' of the economy, the time captured by the mathematicians' point-structure tensor logic. It is the aspect of time Blake had in mind when he called Satan 'the miller of eternity'.

Most music is made to be heard only from within this empty time, helping pin you down within it. To that extent music keeps you bored as you listen, abandoned to the empty reality it evokes, and feeling there is nothing to be done but endure it. Boring music is counter-revolutionary because it adjusts you to the broken reality it is a part of, and which it reflects.

Music becomes especially impoverished when the factory invades the citadel of life. Adorno spoke of the libidinisation of the production line, how its dry-humping rhythms take on a cathectic charge to become desirable. Thanks to advances in technology you can now have endless permutations of this rhythm installed on your iPod for injection during the work run, warming you up for a productive day. Popular music and factory production edge closer together. Music becomes a weapon of mood control, all the better to drive consumption and the wheels of industry.

Perhaps the sound of the factory is more important to many now that so many factories are closing, and this industrial music expresses nostalgia for the productive base as it flees from experience. How you feel about the erotics of the production line is likely to determine how you feel about, say, Kraftwerk,

techno or the disco. Cinema was way ahead of music in reflecting economic reality this way: Dziga Vertov set the standards in the 1920's with films such as *The Man with the Movie Camera*, precision-timed, micro-synchronised hymns to Stalinist productivism and the Five Year Plan – a film for which Kraftwerk could supply the perfect soundtrack.

Outside of the factory, on the consumer side of the equation, time increasingly becomes linked to the cycles governing advertising campaigns and the pulsed repetition of the supermarket, designed to create that hypnogogic state in which the consumer is most susceptible to persuasion. Whole schools of modern music are geared toward recreating this experience as a narcotic; the consumer's befuddlement is generalised, abstracted and sold back to the victim as an ideal. In this state the listener is rendered quiescent, perfectly attuned to the rhythms of consumption and basking in some state of surrender. The music seems to have a calming effect, just as an inmate might cool his cheek against the padding of his cell.

At what appears to be another extreme, ambient music reflects the high gloss vacuity of the service economy, which is spared the need to actually produce, has no need for the production line and, consequently, can defiantly, positively dispense with its rhythms. The free floating non-events of Eno's ambient music are just another way of stalling the experience of real time, in this case actually caressing the empty moment rather than hammering it in with a beat. The amorphousness of ambient music creates not the feeling of space, but of confinement normalised and elevated to an ideal, the perfect soundtrack to a long wait in the reception room of a management consultancy.

We generally experience things as expressions of a mysterious grounding force, an essence which the object to hand embodies and through which it appears to live and have substance. Nothing is independently real in itself but instead becomes a commodity, the working of which is ineffable. As Marx put it, the commodity 'abounds in metaphysical subtleties'.

Records, sounds and entire lifestyles become objects to be taken on board up as commodities. They are just as soon





abandoned to make way for the next round of consumption, keeping the wheel turning indefinitely. The mystery is that dead products take on the signs of individuality and personality, while living individuals slowly become ciphers driven to pursue meaning only by consuming the products which now seem to embody it. The personality of the consumer migrates magically to become the substance of the commodity. The commodity object is fetishised as embodying sublimated human qualities, while the person in turn becomes an object, his qualities suppressed by a culture and economy that prefers all-purpose, blank slate, interchangeable consumers to any kind of properly individuated subjectivity. People and things swap roles.

Empty time is the medium through which this commodity reality is doled out. Having been rendered meaningless by being evacuated, empty time turns around in revenge to usurp life, subordinating it on the model of the clock controlling the production line. Put simply, as the motto of the American Clockmakers Society reminds us: 'time rules all'.

Along with empty time, our age creates a surplus of death, inasmuch as we inherit a kind of living death as our birthright under capitalism. A commodity economy requires the walking dead to keep things ticking over. As this requirement is the first principle of the economy, huge numbers of specialists are kept busy clearing a route for the funeral march, erecting signposts and way stations and lining the pavement to cheer the rest on. Universities, advertising agencies, government departments, political parties and media corporations work to smooth its path and keep things running to order. At the entrance to the economy is a sign announcing: "Welcome to the Death Factory".

More specifically, life and death are locked in conflict, and their struggle is embodied in two measures of time. For the living, to the extent that they slip outside the working world, moments are incommensurable and they live freely in them. But these freedoms turn out to be momentary this side of any real community. Before that they are quickly returned to a deformed social existence, offering only the image of freedom rather than its substance. Crucially, however, it is in these images that

freedom hibernates, having been strangled elsewhere. The point is to end freedom's quarantine and return it to the entirety of existence.

For the dead, moments become so flattened as to be almost indistinguishable. In this dead world everything is eternally new, though nothing ever changes. Its sufferers also learn to dread the moment when the clock stops ticking for them personally, definitively putting an end to a time already largely empty of meaning, sensing the threat that they will die before they even begin to live.

Dead time reinforces the conditions of its existence by keeping you inclined to play the role assigned you consuming alien things. Each new product claims to fill the hole in your existence while actually only affirming and reinforcing it. According to Sufis and Situationists, as you run after products and thrills, or just pursue your daily life, you hover tantalisingly close to the thing you unconsciously want and need: the beach beneath the pavement. The solution is 'closer than your jugular vein, closer than your heartbeat', but escapes you because it is orthogonal to the world you have learned to inhabit and perceive. In the words of the Sufis, you pace up and down the shore but never shove off for the other side.

The navigation between dead and living time doesn't happen in a single miraculous event, the dead time of commodity music stacked up on one side so the only way to escape it is to take one final leap into eternity. In this context at least the Gnostic, mystic idea of time is only suggestive.

What happens instead of the lonely release into the ecstasy of nirvana is that dead time is challenged permanently in everyday experience. A field of force binds the world and its opposition together into a single, embattled totality shot through with contradictions created by the conflict at its heart. Just as physics maintains the picture of a stable macro-world despite the indeterminacy of the quantum world below, the big picture of corporate marketing, high society art ritual and mass marketed circus games is compatible with a more or less underground, more or less recognised and understood world





in which art, politics and life capture the personal experience of expanded time. The big picture persists – Sony and Sting, trivia and boredom – while the underlying reality sees untold musicians and listeners, artists, rioters, rabble-rousers, strikers, demonstrators and other contrarians engage in a war aimed at breaking the back of its routine, succeeding momentarily. Each of these moments contains in cell form the utopian vision of a free society.

Music fights dead time by playing against it. Sun Ra understood, and built his music on this insight. Here is what he told the Arkestra in a rehearsal pep talk;

> *That last phrase was off because you played it correctly. You should play it wrong - a little ahead of the beat. It's very effective. That's the way the older jazz musicians played it. They played a little bit ahead, then, later, Chicago musicians decided to play a little bit behind the beat and that's not easy to do. It's a little ahead or behind. Then there's music that's on the beat. Well, white people can do that.*

You don't have to buy into the afro-centrism that wraps up the argument - ultimately, even Sun Ra didn't. He means only that musicians should spar with time to defeat it rather than just counting out the changes. Under Sun Ra's guidance the Arkestra learned to play ahead of the beat, behind and around it at once. What Sun Ra means is about much more than finicky jazz syncopation or even a more general, abstractly technical skill. It isn't even ultimately about time as such, but touches on everything worth saying about music and its struggle with death and boredom. Ra even goes on to tie this way of making music to political aggravation and the struggle against what sociologists call alienation;

> *Now, Lex Humphries [Arkestra drummer] is passive. He's thinking 'Everything is beautiful, 'cause I'm going to heaven when I die' So he's happy. But don't you believe that, you are restless. You look out at the world and you say 'Something's wrong with this stuff.' Then you get so mad you can play it on your instrument. Play some fire on it. If you're not mad at*

*the world, you don't have what it takes. The world lacks for warriors. Prepare yourself accordingly.*

None of this should be taken to mean that music succeeds in overcoming empty time simply by dodging the metronome. When it works at all, the effect is the result of the organisation of the music as a whole, the relationship between the themes and elements that make up the music to the musical totality they produce by being brought together in a particular situation, which is why Adorno could say of the symphony, of symphonic form, that it produces a *"contraction of time which annihilates... the contingencies of the listener's private existence"*.

I talked about two measures of time rather than two ways of experiencing it because this isn't simply a matter of how you look at things, two ways of experiencing the same underlying time. But the situation isn't necessarily as symmetrical as I have implied since lived time seems *untimely* - outside of time because not limited by it. In lived moments time slips away, and this negation of time is felt as an experience of space. Bound up in time, music, when it plays with time, releases you into space. That is why there is music called 'space rock'; it is one of the reasons Sun Ra believed that 'space is the place', and why, for example, Coltrane played in 'Interstellar Space', 'Stellar Regions', the 'Cosmos' and 'Out of this World'. Varèse shared this intuition, describing his own music as 'spatial' and arguing that the block and beams of sound organised by his scores produce the experience of *"prolongation, a journey into space"*. Space, outer space, comes to represent the everyday world's other, a world broader than our own limited perspective and embodying the sum of utopian possibilities, and music seems to offer a means of getting in touch with it.

In commodity music it is the idea, the theme or the unwinding of a tune that counts. The resolution of chords in a key obviously confirms some predetermined idea about music, and the progress of this happy resolution is measured out in empty time. Predictability (and hence some sort of explicit or implicit repetition) is necessary for music to become a commodity. For the commodity to work it has to be embedded in a network (of





marketing, advertising and so on) that makes sense of what it seems to offer, and this means that a commodity must repeat what has already been said about it in order to be identified. On the other hand, freely improvised music (to give one example) has less interest in such repetition, in the sense of planned and predictable movement; it invests more in the yawp of the moment as the fulcrum of change and development regardless of any plan.

The same arguments regarding the musical treatment of time could be made as easily with regard to tonality. Despite all propaganda to the contrary, tonal systems are *unnatural*; they are ultimately only more or less convenient sedimentations of dead sounds, feelings and practices. Music which insists on the primacy of the old tonal system (or any particular tonal system) is as awkward as music that treats time metronomically, setting in stone feelings and relations belonging to the past without refiguring them for today. Consonance, like time, has to be perpetually rethought if it isn't to remain stuck in a *cul de sac*. This is not to argue for novelty and dissonance for the sake of it, but recognises that the world needs to move on. Music cannot avoid the responsibility of having to address the new circumstances and account for the changing situation of music, musicians, and listeners within it.

Music isn't up to much if it doesn't incorporate new sounds and textures, and seek to address new experiences, new limitations and new possibilities. Certainly it has to be alert to keep ahead of the market's drive to turn everything into a commodity. Without this exploration and development music is in danger of being swamped and turned into something used merely to help paste over and obscure the cracks in the working day. The history of the blues, jazz and modern art and academic music is the history of musicians struggling to bring new sounds to the music in order to keep the music relevant in this way, whether through serialism, microtonality, spectralism, free improvisation or anything else that leads out of familiarity and comfort.

Just as the Surrealists sought to develop a repertory of techniques for producing a derangement of the senses, there is an arsenal of musical manoeuvres aimed at subverting time and tonality, building new forms and textures. Improvising musicians try to base their music spontaneously on these private and collective techniques. Modern composers have their own ideas for treating time, harmony, dissonance and colour to this end. Radical production and recording methods allowed Faust to do something similar in the studio, while in live performance they depended on electronics and their approach to group improvisation.

A little over a century ago, country blues posited the body as the centre of musical meaning, harnessing itself to the body's rhythms and urges in defiance of official agendas. Musicians played slower or faster in accordance with their sense of the song's dramatic meaning, allowing the song to ebb and flow like a force of nature, ignoring any concept of fixed bar lengths or strict time. Idiosyncratic timing at the very least was valued as a part of the singer's personal interpretation of the song. In the case of the greatest bluesmen this personal inflection was more than a marketable style or 'unique selling point', and they could create coherent worlds of their own in their performances. It was when the music took the train out of the countryside and plantation and moved north to the city that it began to adopt something like a regular, standardised pulse, echoing the rhythm of the production lines that black workers at the time were being introduced to.

The city held greater opportunities for collaboration, and plenty of work was to be had for musicians in the bars, clubs and brothels catering to the newly transplanted workforce. The music began to be played by groups of musicians rather than solo, as had been often been the case at home. It therefore became useful to standardise blues timing so the individual musician's knowledge could more easily be transplanted between groups. Musicians needed to be able to play with a new group without first having to learn an entire universe of idiosyncratic phrasing from scratch, and this meant developing standard songs, tunings





and timings. Co-operation at first required the development of standardised time in order for the work of individual musicians to be synchronised in the group context, just as it was required for the co-ordination and control of workers in the context of the factory. The history of the blues in this period is a history of creeping standardisation.

The history of jazz from the time of its emergence from the blues (and elsewhere) through at least until the sixties is, on the contrary, a history of expanding freedom, as the music progressively distances itself from standardised musical forms in a series of shocks and ruptures. For example, the modalism that Coltrane took from his time with Miles Davis uses a mode (scale) as a framework to be filled with spiralling improvised content, inflected by an individual and collective (group) sense of time that can be gained only by months and years of group practice. Coltrane's improvisations compress the world's music so tightly that particular forms melt and merge under the pressure: all that had been standardised in the blues and jazz starts to evaporate.

With his impenetrable theory of 'harmolodics' and, more convincingly, with his playing, Ornette Coleman edged even further toward the boundary of formalism and freedom, to the point where, in theory at least, form is allowed to fall away entirely: *"There's a law in what I'm playing, but that law is a law that, where you get tired of it, you can change it."* Coleman aims at levelling musical hierarchies and *"removing the caste system from sound."* Ayler found his own response to Coltrane by overloading marching tunes, the blues, field hollers and, above all, church music with raw power until they snapped apart - a sound, according to Ted Joans, *"like shouting 'Fuck' in St. Patrick's Cathedral."*

Sun Ra and Cecil Taylor set out their stalls on the frontier ahead of everyone else in jazz. Almost from the start it seemed that Taylor aimed to finally overcome the division of labour, returning music to an organic unity of mind and body: *"Music does not exist within notation, which proceeds from heretical cultural aggrandisement, association, abstraction. 'They' have divided the body, treating the mind as a divided agent."* He

makes an anti-idealist's dance music for the embodied person - head and heart, mind and body without distinction, breaking the back of intellectual, abstract time, tonality and harmony, releasing us, at best, into something approaching an ecstasy of pure sound and physics.

Incredibly, despite this tradition of innovation, contemporary jazz is now more or less comatose anywhere outside of Taylor and the different free jazz communities on either side of the Atlantic. In the name of continuity and respect for tradition, the Marsalis brothers and their friends turned jazz into an standardised, easily identifiable commodity, trading openly on its most conservative traditions and recycling the music of the glory years - according to Stanley Crouch *"the jazz tradition is not innovation"*. Talking the language of black pride, Marsalis & Co. in fact promote the fearful, conservative ideology of the black bourgeoisie. For them jazz is just another asset in the racial trophy cabinet, proof of the inherited cultural capital that gives them too the right to sit at the top table. At best it is reduced to being the sigh of an oppressed and pitiable minority rather than an attempt at superseding the culture of the society which creates that oppression, offering a hint of what might lie beyond it. With the rise of these tendencies, much that was worthwhile in jazz passed over into the free improvisation community, which kept faith with jazz's quest for musical freedom only by breaking with its characteristic styles: a true dialectical negation which has seen it largely detach itself from the rest of the jazz community.

Through much of the century art music and its avant garde developed in ways analogous to jazz, though typically approaching similar ends through very different technical means. In his book *Free Jazz*, Ekkehard Jost offers as an example the way that Taylor's shaking loose of confining tempo can have much the same effect as is sometimes achieved paradoxically through the precise timings of serialism, releasing the music into a less constricted, more subjective space.

This partial convergence of jazz and classical traditions encouraged the conscious development of a 'third stream' music which sought to properly fuse those traditions - the term was





coined by Gunther Schuller in 1957 on the basis of an analogy with the way Bartók married the classical and folk traditions. Apart from this development, with the exception of the 'new complexity' composers (partially and sporadically), some of those working in electro-acoustic and spectral music, and, definitely, the group around the Romanians Iancu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram, contemporary art and academic music has largely thrown in the towel over the last thirty years, seeking instead to address its economic marginalisation by attaching to itself the easily digested but inert textures of minimalism and the 'new tonality'.

Mainstream classical music, or what is marketed as classical music, has, like much of jazz, been racing to commodify itself completely. There has been a huge effort to build new markets by building up the classical equivalent of pop stars such as The Three Tenors and Nigel Kennedy, and through Classic FM programming. Between them these tendencies turn the tradition into a combination of grand spectacle and hummable mood music. Unable to move forward, they skirt the issue by throwing up glossy diversions as if to buy time.

Rock music derived its sense of time from blues and jazz, but tended at first to smooth over their more querulous syncopations in favour of a brute, regular beat. Zappa was the first major figure to make sustained, explicit use of time bending techniques through his use of xenochrony, laying pieces of music with different time signatures together to create new poly-rhythms and sonic tensions. As a devotee of Varèse, Zappa was open to such innovations. In the years since then others have taken up jazz and classical techniques in the drive away from tonality and strict tempo toward some sort of freer expression. Some even created techniques of their own. Much rock and related music is simply part of the entertainment spectacle, but there is a long history of innovation there too.

Although based in very different musical styles, Faust's music often stakes out its space on similar terrain of musical freedom to that cleared by free jazz and free improvisation, allowing musical forces to follow their innate logic by freeing them from what is

ultimately an arbitrary order, allowing them to move tentatively toward the realm of unprocessed physical reality. This is the logic of nature but also (shockingly, from a hippy or new age point of view) the logic of machines, properly understood: Faust tuned into the stochastic poetry of the cement mixer in a way that could not have occurred even to Russolo and the Futurists, though John Cage had an inkling of it and Iannis Xenakis would make this understanding one of the foundations of his music.

This natural-machine-logic is also the logic of dreams, dreams being expressions of the 'nature of mind'. It is an all-inclusive logic because, looked at from the widest angle, everything is nature. So, as Dumitrescu puts it, the musician needs *"to agree with physics, to listen to its laws"*. This talk of physical nature is no atavistic bunking off into an inhuman, uncivilised existence, "scuttling across the floors of silent seas". It simply recognises that the totality of man - machines, civilisation and all - is part of expanded nature, or what used to be called the Cosmos.

Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed. Faust's music, at its best, is not only a Dadaist eruption beyond the confines of the rock music of the time: it is also, like all great music, a product of an organised submission to sonic material that sets it free by mastering it, and masters it only by fighting to set it free. It strikes a balance between control of matter and concordance with it, by way of recognising that so much about matter remains unknown. The music reflects the reality of nature beyond instrumental reason. Musical forces combine and take leave in unforced, artless combination, much as the polymorphous perversity of the childlike unconscious may find the world endlessly gratifying. When this happens, dead time is suspended and life comes forward under its own colours: time implodes into space and sense.

Until the social revolution, these lived moments outside of time remain fleeting and private. Death threatens to erase them altogether, 'like tears in the rain'. To rescue them, and every experience like them, we just need to upset the world and put it on its feet.



# Das also war des Pudels Kern

Along with The Velvet Underground, Frank Zappa is the most obvious influence at work on Faust. Members of the group studied and admired his music. If Faust had any kind of leader or centre in the early days, other than Uwe, it was Rudolf Sosna, and Sosna was seriously interested in Zappa, forever trying to finally work out and unpick his musical 'system' so as to put it to work himself. 'Zappi' Diermaier was given his nickname by a friend of the band, Peter Voss, because he was always carrying Zappa's records with him. His new name had to be tweazed only because another local drummer was already known as 'Zappa', which duplication says something about the extent of Zappa's influence on the group's milieu. The way this influence exerted itself was partly stylistic, but ultimately had more to do with the ambition of his work.

Zappa showed that it was possible to thoroughly fuse rock, jazz, R'n'B, classical and the avant garde. He seemed able to take up any musical form and use it either as raw sonic material, a reference point or as a stop-gap organising principle. And he seemed not so much to hop between genres as to ignore them, or treat them as colouring devices he could pick up and put down at will. From his first recordings with The Mothers of Invention he worked with an expanded vocabulary, wider by far than any that had been attempted before in rock or, arguably, any other genre.

Thematically, Zappa's recorded output is made up of a string of anti-romantic scenarios, often deliberately provocative. Provocative or not, the construction of his work

can be spellbindingly complex, as well as breaking with routine assumptions about popular music and its relationship to entertainment. Zappa challenges ideas about what it is to play rock music and even what it is to make music at all. His politics were militantly petit-bourgeois from top to bottom, but this turned out to be a good position from which to ridicule all manner of pretence, delusion and mystification.

Zappa worked with an unprecedented combination of musical forms and vocabularies, opening the door to others by his example. Arguably he even created the very idea of a rock underground of (hungry) freaks at odds with society and the culture industry they were part of as musicians and consumers.

If that weren't enough, his 'air sculpture' solos offer some of the most hair-raisingly argumentative and articulate guitar playing since Hendrix. Their effect was due in part to the way his use of xenochrony decoupled his guitar from rock's kinetic logic, taking recordings made in different contexts and pasting them together to create melodic and rhythmic complexes which are a product of the editing process itself. So, as Zappa says of the track "Rubber Shirt" from *Sheik Yerbouti* (Zappa Records, 1979), where bass and drum parts are taken from entirely different backing tracks in different tempos: the appearance of subtle dialogue between the parts is an illusion, *"the sensitive, interesting interplay between the bass and drums never actually happened"*. The result of xenochrony is not just the generating of new content, but of a peculiar type of content which seems to luxuriate in the space it inhabits in the music.

Zappa is one of the most significant musicians in rock history. Despite, or possibly because of, that fact it is worth drawing some lines around his achievement to see more clearly how Faust, though they start with Zappa as a premise, are able to move beyond him.

Zappa was inclined to use the studio to serve ideas approved of in advance, ideas borrowed from Varèse, Boulez, Webern, Dolphy and all. Faust, unlike Zappa, weren't in hock to any existing ideas about composition, even the interesting ones that drove him. Less formally sophisticated, in a peculiar version





of the principle of combined and uneven development, Faust's backwardness became an asset, encouraging them to go further in exploring the studio's potential and following its logic more freely. The composer in Zappa famously refused to die, and while this may have led him to create his compelling music, it placed limits on his achievement.

Despite his fascination with new technology, which led him to create pieces such as the astounding Synclavier constructions on *Jazz From Hell* (Barking Pumpkin / Rykodisc, 1986) and *Civilization Phaze III* (Barking Pumpkin, 1994), his approach made it harder for him to ride the technology to new places, as opposed to perfecting what was already known, even if sometimes only to himself. One of the most satisfying aspects of Zappa's work is the way his synthesis of genres manages to avoid the blandness of most fusion music, its levelling-out of what it brings together, but his approach can make some of his transitions mannered even when they are alarming, lessening their impact by turning them into gestures rather than events.

Ultimately his interest in technology was because it let him increase his control by replacing musicians he believed couldn't perfectly realise his concepts. In other words, he used technology to realise preexisting musical ideas. The history of Zappa's music is the history of his expanding control over every aspect of his work, replacing the original Mothers with musicians better able to follow his scores, and then going as far as he could to abandon his musicians altogether. Faust's black boxes represent the antithesis of Zappa's approach: it is impossible to imagine him using any technology which allowed his musicians to control just any part of the music as they played. Zappa's approach required that everyone who worked for him did so in the context of the strictest division of labour. For Zappa, success hinged on his having total control over, and total responsibility for, the music made under his name.

In that sense Zappa represents the culmination of the trend in classical music toward the increasing control of the composer as author of the music. Whereas musical scores had once left significant parts of a composition undetermined, allowing

musicians to interpret it in the light of their own instinct and musical sense, throughout the 19th century the trend was toward narrowing these degrees of freedom to ensure that the performance of the score matched the composer's intentions with increasing accuracy.

While the player's interpolation and commentary had been an essential part of the music, it slowly came to be seen as a barrier to the untrammelled expression of the composer's genius. The collective dimension of the music of the past, which had been limited but nonetheless real, was increasingly forced into the mould of the division of labour, the composer reconfigured to emerge as the font of music while the musicians were turned into drudges tasked only with realising the vision of a great man. The hands and nerves of the musician were displaced by the ideas and brains of the composer. In that sense, for sure, Zappa represents one possible culmination of the compositional tradition, as he would have wished.

It is felt by many that Zappa produced little of interest after disbanding the original Mothers. You don't have to agree with them to recognise that there was nevertheless a cost involved in the expulsion from his music of everything that was not his own. Specifically it means that there is a corresponding lessening of the collective interplay that occurs when musical personalities collide.

Zappa seems to have been aware of what this development was costing him, and it is at just the point where he begins to assume the maximum of control that he introduces xenochrony, starting in his own work with "Friendly Little Finger" on *Zoot Allures* (Rykodisc, 1976), though he first aired the technique on Beefheart's "The Blimp", from the astounding *Trout Mask Replica* (Straight, 1969), produced, or at least recorded, by Zappa. It is as if Zappa was aware that he needed something to balance his own control before it became too obviously constricting. The technique had its roots, at least in part, in Charles Ives' fondness for colliding musical materials, based on an early experience where he heard competing marching bands





trying to play over and against one another as they passed in the park.

Zappa was a fan of William Burroughs, and it is easy to see the influence of his and Brion Gysin's notion of the 'third mind' that emerges from the interplay of texts. Their idea was that the cut-up technique allowed this third mind to emerge, a specific intelligence missing from the original texts but summoned up by their collision. Crucially, this third mind isn't an averaged out, middle of road variation on the originals, but a unique voice and a distinct character on a par with them (in Burroughs, indeed, the new voice may be magically superior).

As we've seen, Zappa arranged the play of separate musical elements so as to allow unplanned musical dialogue (the '*sensitive, interesting interplay*') to emerge from the mix. Talking about the track "Rubber Shirt" again, he described the recording of its unrelated drum and bass parts and how *"the two were sandwiched together."* He concluded that *"The musical result is of two musicians who were never in the same room at the same time, playing two different rates in two different modes for two different purposes, when blended together, yielding a third result which is musical and synchronises in a strange way. That's xenochrony, and I've done that on a number of tracks."*

But xenochrony was only one tool Zappa used to manipulate musical time. He thought that conventional, linear time was an illusion. Time is really *"a constant, a spherical constant,"* so that *"everything happens at the same time"* and the universe is *"one big note."* By extension he saw his life's work as a single 'project-object' that could not properly be broken into parts, and he felt free to combine his latest compositions with material recorded years, sometimes decades earlier. He did this throughout the live recordings released as *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore Vols I-VI*, many of which were stitched together from unrelated performances, separated by years and featuring musicians who, in many cases, had never been in the same room together.

The result, from an orthodox point of view, is an unnatural and paradoxical music. To see this you only have to consider that these are exclusively live recordings made in front of an

audience, yet no one had ever heard them until Zappa summoned them up, while many of the musicians playing together had in fact never shared the same stage. Through such methods Zappa demystifies music by showing it to be the result of artful physical manipulation, rather than the human expression of abstract forms or idealised sound-objects. The approach achieves its apogee in his final masterpiece, *Civilization Phaze III*, which weaves together spoken word recordings made over a period of more than 25 years with fresh recordings of himself, his friends, his Synclavier and the Ensemble Modern.

Zappa sought to cancel time through the mingling of distinct artefacts (recordings), the welding together of alien musics (tones, tempos, scales) and the manipulation *in extremis* of sound using his beloved Synclavier. Just as xenochrony translated materials from one rhythmic framework into another, the Synclavier could translate information between different musical realms to create similarly alien effects. For "The Girl in the Magnesium Dress" (*The Perfect Stranger*, 1984) Zappa took MIDI data the Synclavier had recorded to reflect the musicians' note slurring and other peripheral aspects of a performance, then used it out of context to create rhythms unrelated to the original playing. The resulting music is again paradoxical, in that its rhythm is natural, based wholly on human dexterity, even though it had never been in any sense intended. As with xenochrony the illusion is created of a complex, sophisticated and distinctive musical intelligence at work where, arguably, no such intelligence existed, at least not one whose intentions we might infer from listening to the music it produced.

Despite the undoubted radicalism of Zappa's use of xenochrony it is worth noting that it involves nothing of the openness of Cage's aleatoric techniques and strategies. As you might expect from Zappa, it is used instead as a highly controlled way of sucking structural novelty out of the æther. Zappa would spend hours trying different combinations and arrangements of material before settling on a mix to suit his purpose. The technique certainly opens up his music to the new, even to random events but, typically, only under his ultimate control.





In the same spirit he would integrate the personalities of his musicians into his compositions in the manner of Duke Ellington or Sun Ra, thereby drawing even the unexpected (their solo blowing) into the framework of his concepts. According to Ruth Underwood, *"he knew how to synthesise people's personalities and talents. He wasn't just a conductor standing there waving his arms; he was playing us as people."*

There is something peculiar about the semiotics of Zappa's output and the presentation of his work, so that he can't help but appeal to and encourage a certain ambivalence in the listener. He distanced himself ironically from the themes of his songs and the sources of his music, other than the eminently respectable classical and academic elements. This suits the kind of mind which has conventional, well-bred doubts about the respectability of rock music, allowing his fans to hedge their bets. To this day it is hard to tell what Zappa really felt about any modern popular music other than, perhaps, the doo-wop of his childhood. He may have sneered at the puerility of much rock culture but, conveniently, the knob jokes are the same when told by Flo and Eddie as they are by anyone else.

Zappa smeared pop market sheen over his high-brow constructions, peppering his work with self-referential jokes about the fluff and arcana of commodity society. This creates endless possibilities for folk to drive themselves dizzy with speculation about his totalising genius. The literary qualities of Zappa's output make him, obviously, easier to write about, which is convenient for journalists, academics and Zappa's marketing team alike. Zappa's separation from his material, his cautious use of irony, sarcasm and distance, produces just the kind of effects contemplative literary criticism adores. In the end, his work is too tempting an object of contemplation for journalists to resist.

Faust benefited incomparably from being both a collective and a democracy. Their sharing of ideas and working in different permutations lent new and unexpected dimensions to their work - albeit these dimensions were sometimes empty or curled in on themselves when the forces involved cancelled one another out. But only Faust could have married Dadaist cut-ups, punk and

high romanticism as casually as they did, and only because the forces involved were combined democratically, aligned rather than orchestrated.

Zappa sounds entirely involved in his own personality. His work embodies an endless elaboration of, and commentary on, a single perspective. It is a perspective which, among other things, throws light on hypocrisy, the abuse of power and other everyday political realities, but it has limits and it excludes a world of alternatives. While Zappa carefully managed and controlled the way in which the elements of his work were assembled, creating through a wary and painstaking process of construction, Faust simply collided elements together in their own version of a hi-energy particle accelerator and cloud chamber, causing them to explode then spontaneously reconfigure. Compared with Faust's firework display, Zappa's work sounds coldly considered even at its most attractive.

In line with his image and idea of the role of the composer, Zappa made a point of underlining his position beyond doubt as the brains behind The Mothers of Invention, their managing director, conductor, mouthpiece and *primum mobile*. His image of himself was very much as an entrepreneur, hiring musicians only to manage them in the matter of creating a musical product that was, he insisted, his alone – he was the image of the genius romantic composer. His career saw him slowly improve his control over every aspect of his creation. The original Mothers of Invention had a degree of democracy and plurality, which is why Zappa shut them down after 1970 in favour of musicians and situations that could be moulded more perfectly.

In this ambition to assume complete control Zappa was every bit the student of Varèse, who said he needed *"an entirely new medium of expression: a sound*-producing *machine"*. He explained the benefit of such a machine when he said: *"If you need to know what such a machine could do that the orchestra with its man-powered instruments cannot do, I shall try briefly to tell you: Whatever I write, whatever my message, it will reach the listener unadulterated by 'interpretation'"*. Zappa's Synclavier was the noise-producing machine Varèse imagined.





It is interesting to note that, despite himself, Zappa produced some of his most convincing music when control was denied him for some reason. When the tapes for *Lumpy Gravy* were decimated by Capitol's engineers before being returned to MGM in a legal dispute, he was forced to use more extreme techniques than ever before in reassembling them, creating some of his most outrageously complex music as a result. It seems that to this extent at least, art, in Schoenberg's words, *"does not arise out of ability, but rather out of necessity."* Despite Schoenberg, there is no point in trying to deny that Zappa's work is nevertheless always ultimately shaped by his 'ability'.

Zappa's controlling instinct extended even to himself. It is at the root of his anxious and paranoid dismissal of psychoactive drugs, which he spoke out against consistently – describing LSD users as CIA dupes, for example. He enforced this view on his musicians / employees, even banning them from smoking marijuana on tour (his sacking of Elliot Ingber on these grounds gave Captain Beefheart one of his better guitarists, as Ingber mutated into Winged Eel Fingerling). On this subject it may be worth repeating Baudelaire from his essay "On Wine and Hashish": *"A man who drinks only water has a secret to hide from his fellow men"*. Possibly he only imagines that he has a secret. When it came to mind expanding stimulants Faust were enthusiastic even by the standards of the times, though they were still not quite the LSD-fuelled monsters of later legend.

Different attitudes to drugs reflect different attitudes to control that also shape the music. Maybe Zappa's secret was his fear that he would be swamped by the world if he didn't first subjugate it through his art. He sought to improve his control over the music both intensively - shaping every detail in order to prove his mastery of it - and extensively - expanding its scope to include everything it could. Nothing is left untouched. The sonic equivalent of Adolf Wölfli's paintings or some of Robert Crumb's cartoons, Zappa's music embodies a paranoid, omnivorous *horror vacui* that propels its ambition.

We can follow the same point a little further by noting the connection between Zappa's omnivorous ambition, his solipsistic

urge toward total control and his stand against drugs. Michel Delville and Andrew Norris argue that Zappa's maximalist excess, his scatology and love of the grotesque come down to his locating the body not only as the site of resistance to authoritarian control but as a universal solvent through which all reality may be made sense of through first being experienced as meaningful in relation to the individual.

This offers clues about other aspects of his work once we accept how easily the same materialist emphasis on the body can turn into solipsism. With Zappa, just as in the blues, the body is central. But in his case the body serves not only as the limit against which oppression brushes but, more ambitiously, as a probe through which he feels his way imaginatively about the world (and you can read that last sentence in any sense as you like). Zappa seems to see his experience as coextensive with reality and, like Bishop Berkley's God, he holds the world together by keeping it in mind and perceiving it. It exists only to the extent that it exists for him, through his totalising vision.

As the caretaker of his own reality it was also Zappa's pleasure to sculpt it, as innocently as a child playing with their food. He did so for his own amusement and pleasure, hence his need to push anyone aside that might interfere with the fun he was having in the sandpit, and his need to own the sandpit. Maybe he feared drugs because he thought that, by unhinging his mind, they would cause reality to escape his control. For the solipsist, losing control is the same as the universe collapsing into parts. This fear of matter in its independence from the individual – on the grounds that this matter might swamp, and ultimately topple, the self - sets the limits of Zappa's music.

Without detracting from the responsibility of the individual to think their lonely oppositional thoughts, we can admit that reality can't be grasped adequately by the solitary mind. Ideas have to be challenged by other ideas and tested against the world. Zappa's solipsism is at the root of his most powerful constructions – at the extreme of his management control he could create works of dazzling, almost inhuman articulation, delicacy and precision such as "The Girl in the Magnesium





Dress", already mentioned, or "Jonestown", both from the album *The Perfect Stranger*, or perhaps "N-Lite", from *Civilization Phaze III* (1994) - but it closed his music off from a range of possibilities that simply aren't available to the solitary genius

Faust, as Robert Campbell said of the Sun Ra Arkestra's John Gilmore, preferred the sunshine of music to the spotlight of personality. We can recognise both the validity and persuasiveness of Zappa's omniversal project-object, and even its genius, without surrendering to the temptation to simply boggle at his wit. In a world split by the division of labour, however, Zappa's musical savvy, his references to respectable composers and his rich technical skill attract those who need the assurance that their rock thrills have a certifiable intellectual pedigree and the hallmarks of being obviously brainy.

Zappa liked to sing about low life from the perspective of his high perch. In his freak finery he only seemed anxious to identify with the audience (and market) he was busy creating. Faust, by comparison, looked as if they might actually be hippy-biker low life. In all, Faust are the more suspect proposition, meaning that they are less easily moulded into an acceptable role as court jesters to academics, the liberal cognoscenti and 'other dead people'.

If Faust were modernists they nevertheless displayed little or nothing of Zappa's (or The Soft Machine's) polished Constructivism and utilitarian sheen. Not afraid to go the whole hog in their assault on instrumental reason, they share with punk and early rock and roll a love of the purely negative, the primitivism and hooliganism progressive rock wanted to repress as messy and demeaning.

Anyway, Frank has fans enough already to admire the spectacle of his fore-grounded genius.

# Discography

## *Clear / Faust*

*1971*
*Polydor 2310 142 / POCP-2404 / UICY-9260*
*Recommended RR one / ReR F6 / RR 1*

Why Don't You Eat Carrots? *9.31* / Meadow Meal *8.02* / Miss Fortune *16.35*

## *So Far / It's a Bit of a Pain (single)*

*1972*
*Polydor 2001-299*

So Far *6.12* / It's a Bit Of a Pain *3.08*

## *So Far*

*1972*
*Polydor 2310-195 / POCP 2156 / UICY-9259*
*Recommended RR 2*

It's A Rainy Day (Sunshine Girl) *7.21* / On The Way to Abamae *2.42* / No Harm *10.09* / So Far *6.12* / Mamie is Blue *5.55* / I've Got My Car and My TV *3.42* / Picnic On A Frozen River *0.36* / Me Lack Space *0.36* /...In the Spirit *2.59*

## *The Faust Tapes*

*1973*
*Virgin VC-501*
*Recommended RR 6 / ReRF2CD / RR25*

Exercise #1 *0.52* / Exercise #2 *0.21* / Flashback Caruso *4.01* / Exercise #3 *1.48* / J'ai Mal Aux Dents *7.14* / Untitled #1 *1.03*





/ Untitled #2 *1.42* / Dr Schwitters #1 *0.25* / Exercise #4 *1.11* / Untitled #3 *1.18* / Untitled #4 *0.50* / Dr Schwitters #2 *0.49* / Untitled #5 *1.03* / Untitled #6 *0.47* / Untitled #7 *1.33* / Untitled #8 *2.18* / Untitled #9 *0.34* / Untitled #10 *0.51* / Untitled #11 *1.15* / Untitled #12 *2.28* / Untitled #13 *0.20* / Untitled #14 *1.13* / Untitled #15 *0.59* / Stretch Out Time *1:35* / Der Baum *3.49* / Chère Chambre *3.07*

*This track listing is from the remastered version of The Faust Tapes released as part of the The Wümme Years box set by Recommended Records.*

## *Faust IV*

*1974*
*Virgin V 2004 / CDV 2004*

***Original Release***: Krautrock *11.45* / The Sad Skinhead *2.33* / Jennifer *7.09* / Just a Second (Starts Like That) *3.35* / Picnic On a Frozen River (Deuxieme Tableaux) *7.53* / Lauft... Heisst Das es Lauft Oder es Kommt Bald... Lauft *3.35* / Run *3.37* / It's a Bit of a Pain *3.08*

***Bonus disc from the 2006 EMI re-release***: The Lurcher *7.56* / Kraut Rock *11.42* / Do So *2.33* / Jennifer (alt) *7.10* / The Sad Skinhead (alt) *3.19* / Just a Second (Extended) *10.30* / Piano Piece *5.56* / Lauft (alt) *4.12* / Giggy Smile (alt) *5.55*

## *Faust V / Faust 5$^{1/2}$*

*1975*
*Unreleased Virgin Demo*

Munic -Yesterday *10.53* / Party #9 *10.22* / 360° *3.38* / Party #10 *2.01* / Munic Party *1.40* / Munic Untitled *6.42* / Knochentanz *11.46*

## *Faust Party Tapes #1*

*1979*
*Recommended ReRR6.5*

Chromatic *9.45* / Party #6 *0.42* / Giggy Smile *3.23*

## *Faust Party Tapes #2*

*1979*
*Recommended ReRR1.5*

Party #1 *3.39* / Party 2 *7.04* / Lieber Herr Deutschland *3.23*

## *71 Minutes of …*

*1979*
*Recommended RR25 / ReRF1CD / ReRF7CD*

Munic A *11.55* / Don't Take Roots *4.51* / Das Meer *2.45* / Knochentanz *11.46* / Baby *4.19* / Party #2 *7.04* / Party #8 *1.21* / Psalter *4.05* / 25 Yellow Doors *4.29* / Chromatic *9.45* / Party #6 *0.42* / Giggy Smile *3.23* / Lieber Herr Deutschland *3.23*

## *Return of a Legend: Munic and Elsewhere*

*1986*
*Recommended RR25*

Munic Yesterday *11.55* / Don't take Roots *4.51* / Das Meer *2.45* / Munic Other *11.46* / Baby *4.19* / We are the Hallo Men *4.30*

## *The Last LP*

*1989*
*Recommended Records*

Party #2 *7.04* / Party #8 *1.21* / Psalter *4.05* / Party #5 - 25 Yellow Doors *4.29* / Party #1 *3.39* / Chromatic *9.45* / Party #6 *0.42* / Giggy Smile *3.23* / Lieber Herr Deutschland *3.23*

## *Untitled*

*1996*
*Klangbad*

Not Nearest By *5.37* / Komm Mit *4.19* / A '70s Event *11.49* / Sad Skin Two *2.32* / Expecting S. in Love *3.14* / Fastened 60/60 *1.15*

## *The BBC Sessions*

*1996*
*Recommended ReR F3V / ReRFB1*
*Various Bootlegs*

***Original Recommended release***: The Lurcher *7.56* / Kraut Rock *11.42* / Do So *2.33* / Kisses for Pythagoras *8.35*

***Bootleg release***: The Lurcher *7.56* / Kraut Rock *11.42* / Do So *2.33* / Party #9 / 360° *3.38* / So Far (alternative) *3.38* / Das Meer (alternative) *3.13*

***Wümme Box Set CD***: The Lurcher *7.56* / Kraut Rock *11.42* / Do So *2.33* / Party #9 / 360° *3.38* / Party #10 *1.12* / Party #1 *3.39* / We are the Hallo Men *4.30* / So Far (alternative) *3.38* / Meer (alternative) *3.13*





## *Faust: The Wümme Years*

*2000*

*Recommended ReRFB1*
*The definitive collection of material from Wümme, combining Clear, So Far, The Faust Tapes, 71 Minutes, and a much expanded version of the BBC Session material, including previously unreleased tracks as well as documentation containing new interviews with key members of the group and their entourage.*

***Clear / Faust***: as original release

***So Far***: as original release

***The Faust Tapes***: as original release

***71 Minutes***: as original release

***BBC Sessions***: The Lurcher *7.56* / Kraut Rock *11.42* / Do So *2.33* / Party #9 / 360° *3.38* / Party #10 *1.12* / Party #1 *3.39* / We are the Hallo Men *4.30* / So Far (alternative) *3.38* / Meer (alternative) *3.13*

## *Patchwork*

*2002*
*Klangbad / Staubgold 19692 / Staubgold 37*
*A collage by Jochen Irmler of material from throughout Faust's history, including tapes and reworked versions of early material as well as later recordings.*

Walter Adler *(1971) 0.42* / Stretch Over All Times *(1971/73, 2000/01) 2.17* / A 70's Event *(edit, 1973) 2.17* / Rittersleut and Anderes *(excerpt 1, 1971) 3.32* / Ayi Ayi *(1972/73) 1.34* / Psalter *(slow, 1980) 2.46* / Tourbotrain *(1974) 1.27* / Nervous *(2001) 2.46* / Passings *0.32* / Duo *(1973) 2.14* / Pause *0.16* / Jassie *(1972) 2.22* / Ironies *(1972/82/97/2002) 1.23* / zerr:aus *(1971) 1.56* / Drone Organ *(1973/74) 3.35* / Stretch Out *(1972/2002) 2.40* / Elegie *(1972/84) 2.22* / Rittersleut and Anderes *(excerpt 2, 1971) 2.27* / Klaviernacht *1.07* / Out of Our Prison *(1974) 4.18*

## *Abzu*

*2003*
*Private Release / The Faust List*
*Four CD's in a spiral bound serrated black cover and semi-*

*transparent and black slips. A record of the Faust 'Day in the Life' special presented by Andy Wilson and Ian Land for Resonance Radio, 4th August 2002. Combines live, rare and previously unreleased tracks as well as interviews with Chris Cutler and Jochen Irmler. Chris Cutler's interview is spread across disc A: III,VIII,XII,XVII,XXIV. The tracks B:1-1V recorded live at The Garage, London, 1996. B:V-VIII are solo tracks by Jochen Irmler. B:IXf is an interview recorded with Jochen especially for the Resonance show. Disc Z is made up of Keef Roberts' Faust Redux project. U:VI-XV recorded live at Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT, USA, 5 May 1994. U:XVI is Ian Morrisson's Elektron (Coulomb Remix). This limited release was made available only to members of the Faust mailing list as a record of the Resonance programme.*

***Disc A - 1990 and Beyond***: Resonance Station Tag 1 *2.19* / Stadtluft *4.21* / The German Group° / Right Between Yr Eyes *2.45* / Liebeswehen 2 *5.09* / Resonance Station Tag 2 *0.49* / Mikrowaves *2.20* / Chris Cutler: On Stage° / Magic Brew *3.40* / R BE YR EY II *3.09* / Matrosen (Shorty) *1.30* / Chris Cutler: A Bag of Fleas° / From the Upper Underworld (Little Ravvivando) / Semi-Anonymous / Resonance Station Tag 3 *0.37* / Semi-Anonymous II *8.21* / Chris Cutler: Turn it Up° / Rucklauf / I Don't Buy *3.14* / Six to Eight *3.53* / Resonance Station Tag 4 *1.23* / The Faust Spot / Tur Auf Dr Haid / Chris Cutler: Faust Method° / Compilationstuck *3.26* / BBC Guitar / Electricity / Cendre *2.38** / Nova

** Jean-Hervé Péron, live at the LMC Festival , 29 May 2000*
*° Interview with Chris Cutler*

***Disc B - London and Beyond***: Hailstorm *4.54** / Monsieur Piquette *4.48** / Hurricane *7.04** / J'ai Mal Aux Dents *4.09** / Hans-Joachim Irmler: Roman Museum II *8.38* / Greetings From the Jungle *8.25°* / Red Land *5.39°* / Aim Ambience *5.54°* / Interview #1 *13.53°* / Interview #2 *7.05°* / Interview #3 *0.20°* / Interview #4 *9.21°* / Interview #5 *8.48°* / Interview #6 *0.38°*

** Live at The Garage, London 2 Dec 1996*
*° Jochen Irmler*

***Disc Z - Faust Redux***: Second Time Around *4.39* / Dirk The Turtle Boy *11.41* / Pete Dilemma *0.59* / The Gift Horse Bites My Ass *4.31* / The Journey of the Three Women *1.28* / Wie Wir in Freiheit auf Greed Fuhren *2.00* / Nobody of the Year *2.04* / Kicks My Dick in the Dirt *1.26* / East of the Equator *2.37* / Just Like Sleeping Gas *0.59* / I Could Swing For You *2.23* / Groedipus *4.35* / Plus Pas La Chance

*2.47* / Empty Cathedral *2.39* / Lose Your Senses *2.27* / Making Our Way To Kilimanjaro *4.08* / Unsafe At Any Speed *2.08* / Wir Sprachen Stunden... *3.05* / Dude Rising *1.27* / What's Hip and What Should Never Be *1.44* / Cabbage Rock *1.53* / Where Would We Be Without Herb Skirt? *2.25* / Rayonnez Moi vers le Haut Scotty *10.16* / Chevret Loopiz *4.28*

*All material on this CD is by Keef Roberts, and consists of new music made entirely from samples from Faust.*

***Disc U - Wümme, Munic and Beyond***: Sax Manipulation Room *(1971) 1.17* / So Far (alternative) *3.38* / Wonderworld *(1975) 1.05* / Helinstor Shuffle *3.39* / Zerrsounds *1.36* / Mamie Is Blue *6.19** / Viel Obst *9.06** / Splattered / Car Tu Seras Nu / I've Got My Car And My TV *6.33** / Listen to the Fish *8.48** / The Sad Skinhead *4.37** / Electronique / Ex::cess *4.42** / Ian Morrisson: Elektron (Coulomb Remix)

** Live at Real Art Ways, Hartford, 5 May 1994*



# Online

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|---|---|
| ***The Faust Pages***: | *http://www.faust-pages.com* |
| ***Art-Errorist - Jean-Hervé Péron***: | *http://www.art-errorist.de* |
| ***Klangbad - Jochen Irmler***: | *http://www.klangbad.de* |
| ***Zappi Diermaier***: | *http://www.zappi-w-diermaier.com* |

To subscribe to the Faust mailing list send an e-mail to *listserver@ faust-pages.com* with **subscribe faust** as the subject. Send the mail from the account that you want to subscribe.

To contact the author, send mail to: *StretchOutTime@ googlemail.com*

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| ***Ectogram***: | *http://www.ectogram.co.uk* |
| ***Freq***: | *http://www.freq.org.uk* |
| ***Holy Mountain***: | *http://www.holymountain.com* |
| ***Kosmische Club***: | *http://www.kosmische.org* |
| ***LMC***: | *http://www.l-m-c.org.uk* |
| ***Militant Esthetix***: | *http://www.militantesthetix.co.uk* |
| ***Recommended Records***: | *http://www.rermegacorp.com* |
| ***Resonance Radio***: | *http://www.resonancefm.com* |
| ***The Sound Projector***: | *http://www.thesoundprojector.com* |
| ***S/T***: | *http://www.get-happy-records.com* |
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*Thanks to the many people who contributed photographs, scans and images, especially Chris Cutler and Edwin Pouncey.*

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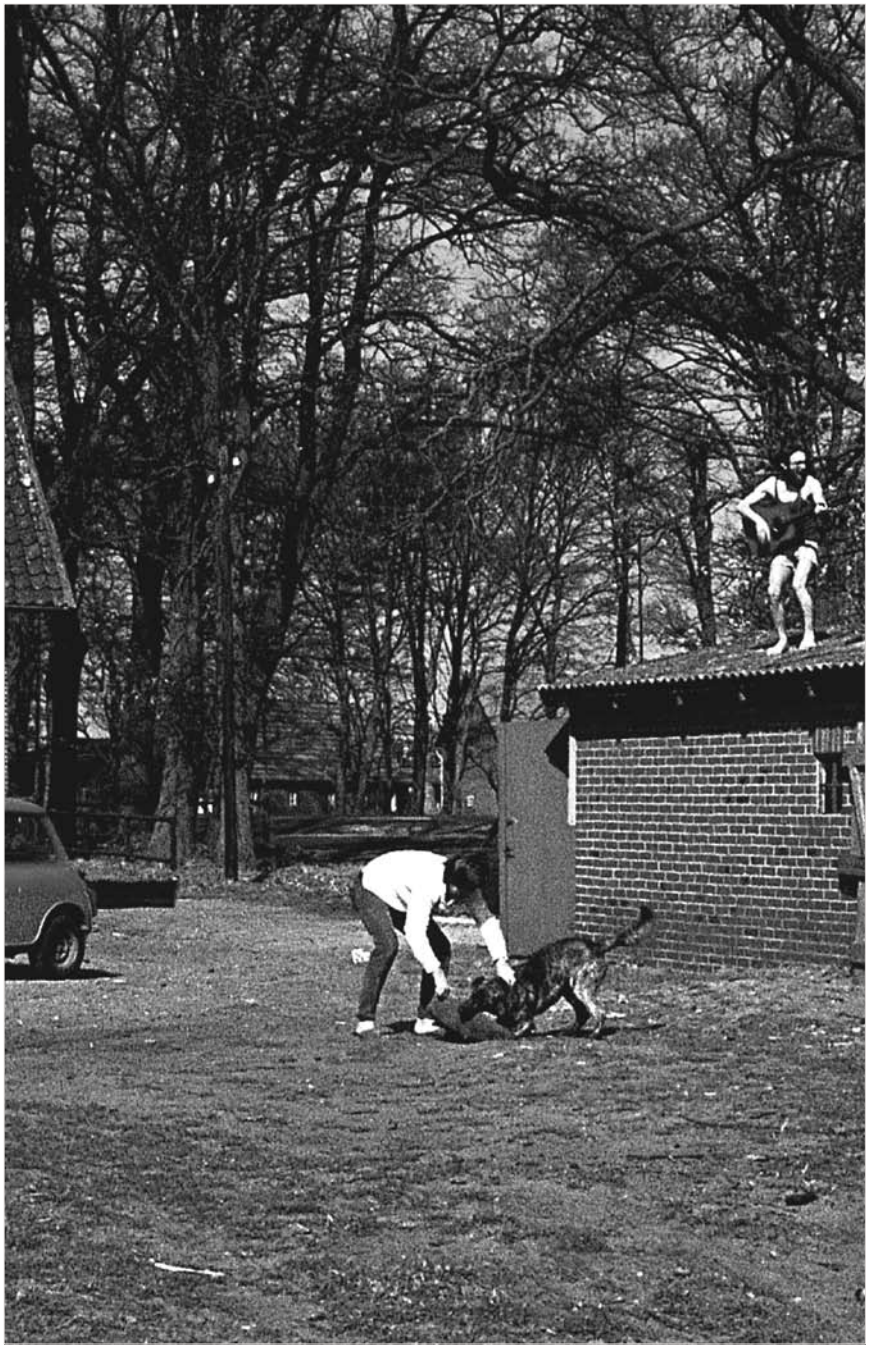

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